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MARION LESLIE:

A STORY.

BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

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MARION LESLIE.

CHAPTER I.

We must now return to Ninian, whom we left at John Norrie's cottage, and whose illness prevented him from knowing what had occurred. Thanks to the care of Mrs. Kynoch, and to the remedies of his bibulous but not unskilful medical attendant, he was now pronounced out of danger. The soundness of his constitution, unimpaired by excess of any kind, had also contributed to this result, though the doctor, as is usual in such cases, had claimed all the credit to himself. He described the different stages of the disease, and the different remedies which he had adopted, in grandiloquent terms, which were all the more admired by his audience because they were perfectly

unintelligible; and assured Mrs. Kynoch, when she paid him his very moderate fee, that her son's life was due to his skill, and to her not having called in his rival, Mr. McSquill, who was in the habit of killing more than he cured. A few complimentary remarks, and an ample glass of whisky, put the doctor on excellent terms with himself and all the world, and he parted from Mrs. Kynoch with the assurance that time and quiet were the only physicians of whose aid her son now stood in need.

The different paroxysms of the disease had left him in a state of deplorable weakness. His mind also seemed to have suffered as well as his body: he was patient and gentle as a child, but he seemed to feel little interest in his own recovery, and made no inquiries about his friends at Loanhead.

He would remain for hours together with his eyes closed, and when roused from this dreamy, half-conscious state, he speedily relapsed into the same condition. It was evident that the mind was at fault as well as the body, and as the simple souls who

waited upon him knew little about ministering to a mind diseased, they had recourse to the expedient usually adopted by the peasantry in every emergency—they sent for the minister.

John Norrie strongly recommended his own minister, the Rev. Mr. McGirder, as one whose own soul was thoroughly purged from all Erastian error, and whose skill in dealing with the souls of others was far superior to that of the stipend-lifters of the Established Church, who cared little for anything but the loaves and fishes, and too often left their people to perish for lack of knowledge.

Under ordinary circumstances, Mrs. Kynoch would have resented this attack on the clergymen of her own church, but her spirit was softened by adversity, and her heart was grateful to her kind but bigoted host, who refused to receive any remuneration for the hospitality shown to her and her son, under the pretence that it would be wrong to charge anything for the stranger within his gates. She respectfully declined the services of Mr. McGirder,

notwithstanding John's assurance that he was a wonderful binder-up and sustainer of all weak vessels, and despatched a messenger to Mr. Hamilton, her own minister. John Norrie's house was not in Mr. Hamilton's parish, but as Mrs. Kynoch was his parishioner, he lost no time in visiting her son. He was satisfied, after hearing her statement of the case, that the illness was the result of mental causes, and that nothing but an entire change of scenery would divert the mind from the painful ideas which had gained the mastery over it, and reduced the body to its present state of weakness. There was little chance of his recovery so long as he remained in John Norrie's box-bed, where the landscape was limited to wooden walls, and the air was far from being bracing.

Poor Ninian was passive in the hands of his friends. A cart was filled with fragrant hay, which formed a soft and delicious couch for the sufferer. His mother sat beside him and supported his head when shaken by the rough jolting of the cart as it sunk into the deep ruts of the road which

led to Loanhead. The country is so flat that the sea is not seen till the traveller is almost close upon it. The lark was high in the lift carolling forth its joyous song; the dreamy, sleep-producing sound emitted by the bees, as they winged their way from flower to flower, and dived into their cups to rifle their hidden treasures, was heard in the neighbouring fields; it was that season of the year when the consciousness of existence is itself a luxury, and man sees in the revivifying powers of nature the emblem of his own immortality; but Ninian's soul seemed shut out from the external world—his heart knew its own bitterness, and his eye was turned away from the glad sights which were so little in keeping with his own feelings. The external world is moulded into keeping with the master passions of the moment, and wears the sable garments of mourning, or the gala-day costume of rejoicing, just as our own feelings happen for the moment to be joyful or sad. Nature is like a mirror which faithfully reflects the expression of our features as we gaze upon it.

Perhaps the jolting of the springless cart had something to do with rousing Ninian from his state of apathy.

It is said that the mind, when deeply absorbed by any engrossing thought or feeling, becomes in a great measure unconscious of bodily sensations, even when the latter happen to be of an unpleasant character; but we defy any modern philosopher, say Whewell, or any one else remarkable for his powers of abstraction, to pursue any philosophical course of reasoning while his prostrate body is tossed in a cart on a Scotch road—much in the same way as the body of that shrewdest of men, Sancho Panza, was tossed in a blanket by his unfeeling countrymen.

Whatever may have been the cause, Ninian roused himself and sat up, as John Norrie's horse slowly toiled his way up the rising ground which commands the first view of the sea and the fishing villages along the coast. The sight of the sea seemed to produce much the same effect upon him as it did thousands of years ago upon the ten thousand followers of Cyrus—his face was

lighted up with an expression of pleasure, and he pointed out, as a child might have done, to his mother the different localities with which he had been familiar from infancy, and hailed the sight of them with as much pleasure as if he had been absent from them for years. The silver cord had indeed been loosened, but the magic touch of home was restoring it to its former and natural state.

When the cart reached the cottage door, John Kynoch was already waiting to receive his only son. When he saw the effects produced upon him by his recent illness, and felt how light he was, as he lifted him gently from the cart, his honest heart was touched with sorrow, and a tear glistened in his eye. Ninian observed it, and taking his hand tried to comfort him :—

"Never mind, father, you will soon make me well again. The sight of the sea has made me stronger already. You will take me out with you in the boat, and the sea-breeze will soon do the rest."

They entered the cottage, where Alice welcomed him with sisterly love. One

youthful form was missing; he made no inquiry, his heart divined it all. He felt almost grateful that the great temptation which had beset his path, and almost goaded him to madness, was now gone for ever. His future life might be a life of sorrow, but, at least, it would be free from remorse. She was lost to him for ever, but far better that than that he should be lost to himself for ever.

His father and mother made no allusion to Marion, beyond the simple statement of the fact that she had left them for ever, and he forbore to make any inquiry. He soon felt deeply interested in the narrative of the disasters of that fearful day, when the fishing smack and so many valuable lives were lost; and it seemed to him selfish and unmanly to indulge in a feeling of unavailing sorrow at being deprived of the object of his heart's idolatry, when so many helpless widows and orphans were drying up their tears and again entering the lists in the stern battle of life. He would master his sorrow, and do his part yet bravely in the world.

His father's circumstances were now very much altered. He was no longer the wealthiest man in Loanhead, and though still the proprietor of several boats, he would have to work harder than ever to make some provision for his wife and daughter, as the common fate of fishermen might soon overtake him. He could bear all manner of hardness himself, but he shrank from the idea of leaving his wife and daughter dependent upon the kindness of others.

He told all this to Ninian, in such a kind and tender way that all the generous part of the young man's nature was roused, and he resolved to aid his father more than ever in making the provision which he desired. He was, in the course of a few days, able to accompany his father in the boat, and, though still weak, he contrived to make himself useful. The bracing sea-breeze soon brought back the ruddy colour to his cheeks, and after a few weeks he had regained his former appearance, and was able to perform his usual duties.

His father and mother congratulated

themselves on this change, and rejoiced at the thought that their son was now recovered from his hopeless passion. In their presence he was ever cheerful, as he would have deemed it selfish to cause them uneasiness by any display of his feelings; but the watchfulness of his sister, Alice, could not be deceived. She was satisfied that he was labouring under a deep and settled melancholy, the cause of which she could easily divine; and she thought often and again, as she sat by the window and looked out on the sea, whether she could not devise some means of diverting his thoughts into a different channel, or of inspiring him with something of hope. If she even failed in this undertaking, it would be something if she could persuade him to make her his *confidante*; his pent-up feelings would be relieved, and the burden of his sorrow lightened, if he could only be induced to open up his heart.

One evening they were left alone. They talked of every subject except the one in which both were most deeply interested. There was a barrier of reserve between them, which it required some delicacy and

resolution to surmount. Ninian had never mentioned Marion's name to his sister, or made any inquiries regarding her.

At length Alice mustered courage to say—

"I have had a letter from Marion to-day, Ninian."

She waited a little, but there was no reply. The young man's face became flushed with suppressed emotion, but he remained silent.

"She is about to leave this part of the country. She is going to school, first in England, and then in France, and she expects to be absent for two or three years."

"Will she not call to say good-bye to you, before leaving?"

"I do not know. I am sure she would like to do it; but she may find it difficult. You know she must be guided by her uncle and aunt, and they may not wish her to have much intercourse with us."

"Why not? Are we not as good as they are? Surely she owes something to the parents who adopted her, as well as to the uncle and aunt who were so slow to discover their relationship."

"You know the Leslies are very proud. I do not blame them. I might be as bad if I were in their position. But they *are* very proud. They want to make Marion a fine lady, and that is the reason why they are sending her out of the country."

"And when she comes back a fine lady, she will look down upon you and me, Alice. I never saw but one fine lady; but I shall never forget her. It was Mrs. Russell, of Paradise Hill—the daughter, I believe, of a London tradesman. She was dressed in all the colours of the rainbow, and looked as if the earth were not good enough for her to tread upon. She passed me and my father one day as we were eating our dinner in the boat, which was drawn up on the beach. It was a poor dinner, no doubt; but we were thankful for it. She stopped for a moment to examine us with her eye-glass, and then, turning to her husband, on whose arm she leaned, said—'What miserable whelps these are!' There was a flash in my father's eye, which showed how keenly he felt the words, but he soon turned to me with a smile."

"She does not think much of us, Ninian; but we are not so miserable, lad, as she thinks. I am glad, though, that she spoke these words of us, who can forgive them, rather than of others, who might have hated her and her class ever afterwards."

"That was the only fine lady I ever saw, and I do not wish to see another."

"Marion will never be like that. She will never despise the class among whom she was brought up; but she will become changed in all her tastes and habits, so that you and I will feel her to be almost a different being. She will be a lady, and no one can ever expect to marry her unless he be a gentleman."

This was probing the wound to its lowest depths, and it was little wonder that Ninian winced beneath the process.

"What do you mean by a gentleman, Alice?"

"Well, Ninian, I can scarcely tell you. It is not money or fine clothes, or even fine manners, that make a gentleman. I have often thought that our father had much of the gentleman about him, and I think that

you, too, Ninian, might become a gentleman. When I think of a gentleman I always think of Mr. Hamilton. It is not his learning, or his manners, or his position; but a certain something which is felt by all, though it would be difficult to define it. He shows as much consideration for the feelings of an old pauper in the Female Hospital as if she were a duchess; he is as much at home talking with a labourer as with a nobleman; he has the happy knack of finding the nearest way to the hearts of all he meets; and while respecting others, he seems ever to expect that others should respect him. I could not fancy any one being rude to Mr. Hamilton."

"Mr. Hamilton and I, Alice, ought to be much flattered by your good opinion of us. But I quite agree with you as regards him. He can place himself on the same level with everyone he meets; but, oh, Alice, it would be madness to think that I could ever reach the same level with him."

"I do not know—I do not think it would be madness; but we shall talk of that presently. But I have one question to ask

you. Do you still love Marion Leslie?"

"I do."

"Do you think that you have strength of mind to conquer your passion so far as that, in course of time, you could see her the wife of another without repining?"

"Oh, Alice! do not hint at such a thing —the idea of it almost makes me mad. I cannot cease to love her, though I feel that my passion is hopeless. How could I, a poor sailor boy, ever expect to become a gentleman, so as to be worthy of the hand of Marion Leslie?"

"When you were a little boy, Ninian, you were often left under my charge in the long evenings, when our father was out with the boats, and our mother watching their return. I could always keep you quiet by telling you stories, and, when my stock was exhausted, I had to compose others for your benefit. Perhaps I can best answer your question by telling you another story, the hero of which is known to us both, though his early history is known only to me:—

"In a landward parish in this county

lived a small crofter of the name of Andrew Brown. He was a sober, industrious man, whose great ambition in life was to get 'the bite and the sup' for the numerous sons and daughters who were born to him, and to have the money ready for the factor when the rent day came round. He gave his children a fair education at the parish school, and as soon as they were old enough to work hired them out as servants among the neighbouring farmers. It was the hardest *tug* on his heart to part with his son Alick, the Benjamin of his old age, a dark, curly-haired stripling of fifteen, whose quickness in learning, and winning manners, made him a special favourite with old Mr. Kittlem, the parochial schoolmaster. Old Andrew kept him at school as long as he could, debating in his own mind whether he might not venture to put him in the Latin, so as to prepare him for college; but prudence prevailed, and he was engaged as a herd-boy by a small proprietor in the neighbourhood, who farmed his own property.

"He still retained his taste for reading,

which he had ample time to indulge. He could repeat by heart most of Barbour's poetry, was familiar with the works of Gawaine Douglas, the godly Bishop of Dunkeld, and could recite Allan Ramsay's 'Gentle Shepherd' from end to end. There was not a 'bole' or 'ingle nook' in the whole country-side which he had not ransacked for books, and he read everything that came in his way, from 'Boston's Fourfold State' to the 'Life and Adventures of Bamfylde Moore Carew.' His memory was so excellent that, when asked by the minister, at the annual examination, if he could pray, he repeated Mr. McRoray's first prayer—which was supposed, of course, to be extempore, but which, somehow, happened always to be the same, word for word—and had commenced the second, when he was arrested by the minister abruptly exclaiming, 'Stop, stop! my lad, I see *you* can pray.'

"Alick Brown soon won the confidence of Mr. Falconer, his employer, and became a general favourite with all the members of his family. In remote parts of this county,

as you know, there is more familiarity between masters and servants than usually prevails in other districts, and Mr. Falconer allowed his children to associate with his shepherd boy, being satisfied that they could receive no harm from their intercourse with him. Isabella, his eldest daughter, a fair young *blonde* of twelve, with lint-white locks, shewed a special predilection for the society of one who knew all the habits of the birds and the beasts of the fields—who could shew her the spots where the primroses and other flowers first appeared in spring, and make the long summer evenings short by the recital of old-world poetry, or narratives of strange adventure in the days of 'Wallace wight' and the Bruce. No wonder, then, that she preferred the society of her father's shepherd to that of her own governess, a middle-aged lady, who had very strict ideas about female propriety.

"In due time the shepherd boy became a horseman or ploughman, and before he had reached his nineteenth year was promoted to be grieve or bailiff

on his master's property, the highest rank to which one in his position could aspire. Most young men would have thought that they had reached the top of the ladder, but it was not so with Alick Brown. He was a faithful, conscientious servant, who rose up early and lay down late, and ate the bread of diligence, but his mind was ill at ease. He loved his master's eldest daughter, now a tall, graceful girl of sixteen ; he knew that such love was madness and folly, but he could not cease to love her.

"It was the same with the fair-haired Isabella, and from the time that she discovered the state of her feelings she avoided all intercourse with the object of her affections. She was not ashamed of her love or of its object, but she knew that her parents would never approve of her marrying their own servant; and, unlike many young ladies of the present day, she considered that her parents had a right to be consulted on such a point.

"It is impossible that two young people, loving one another, and living near to one

another, should remain long ignorant of their mutual affection. One evening they met unexpectedly, and Alick told his master's daughter that he was about to leave her father's service.

"I cannot give you the exact words which passed between them, nor can I tell you how it was that they came to know that they loved one another. But that was the end of it. They came to know it, and both felt that, as matters then stood, there was no hope for them.

"It was for this reason that Alick was about to leave. It would be treacherous for him to remain in his master's service with the feelings which he cherished for his master's daughter. He must go elsewhere, he could not remain there with honour or safety.

"It was then that Isabella spoke — the fair-haired, timid girl who spoke so little, and who almost blushed at the sound of her own voice.

"'It is hard to part, Alick, but we *must* part for the present. We could never be happy if I married you while you are a

servant. It would be hard to bear my father's anger, and to lose the respect of all my kindred, but it would be worse than all to see you miserable.'

"'*Me* miserable, Isy?—*that* could never be, if I had you for my wife.'

"'If you had me for your wife, Alick, I should have to toil and work like the wife of any other poor labouring man. I think I could bear all that for your sake; but, oh! Alick, would you like to see me doing it? A man always fixes the social position of his wife, and I have not been trained for such a life. You would never forgive yourself —you would be miserable at the thought of having dragged me down to your level— my very looks of welcome when you came home at night would be reproaches to you.'

"'Ah, Isy, I did not think of that; but I feel that you are right.'

"'It has always seemed to me,' said the young girl, blushing, 'that you could raise yourself to a higher position than the one you now occupy. If you exert yourself you may be able some day to claim me as your

bride, and I to accept you as my husband, with the consent of all my friends.'

"'How could I exert myself? What can I do? I can never expect to be anything better than I now am.'

"'Look at Mr. McRoray, our minister. He was the same as you, till he lost two of his fingers with a threshing mill. He could no longer work, so he prepared himself for college, and became a minister. If a poor, fusionless body like McRoray could do that just to make a livelihood, surely you could do the same.'

"'But it would take twelve years before I could be licensed. Would you be willing to wait for me all that time?'

"I need not tell you her answer, or what followed. She had not to wait so long. The shepherd lad toiled day and night at the classics, and prepared himself for college in one fourth of the time usually required. The parish schoolmaster was something of an enthusiast, and felt an honest pleasure in teaching one who was so apt to learn.

"At the first competition for college

bursaries he appeared as a candidate. There were many competitors, most of whom had enjoyed every advantage of training; but there was a buzz of admiration and surprise when the old principal read out the name of Alexander Brown as the first bursar, and a young ploughman—his dress and appearance remained unaltered—stepped forward to give the place where he had studied. The old dominie was a proud man when he heard the news; but there was one prouder still, who shed silent tears of joy when she heard the news, and blessed Him in her heart who is the author of all success.

"The shepherd's secret became known, and gained him many kind friends; but he would accept no money, except as a loan. I have heard those who studied with him say that he had all the refined and delicate feelings of a gentleman, and that he was treated by the younger students with more respect and deference than were always shewn to their professors—so wonderful is the transforming power of love.

"In due course of time he was licensed,

and got a kirk, and—what he valued still more—the hand of the generous, true-hearted girl who had first pointed out the path of success, and waited patiently till he had reached the goal. She sacrificed nothing in marrying such a husband, for he had raised himself to her social level. They are now the happy parents of many children, and the respected minister of —— still loves to relate how he once whistled at the plough.

"Now, Ninian, my story is done. Judging from your face, I think it must have been interesting to you. I think if a man has firmness of purpose and constancy of will he may accomplish anything. It is different with women."

"Thank you, Alice—I like your story very much. I shall think over it, and let you know the result."

CHAPTER II.

Life at Inverchewan Castle was different from life in John Kynoch's cottage at Loanhead, and Marion Leslie, though impressible and imitative, was at first rather *gênée* by the sudden transition. She found herself transported, as it were, into a new world, where everything served to excite her curiosity and admiration. The furniture, though neither new nor fashionable, was sufficient, in its tarnished splendour, to impress the mind of one who had never seen anything but the primitive cottages of Loanhead, the inhabitants of which are thus characterized by a local poet :—

> "They are not fond of innovations,
> Nor covet much new reformations ;
> They are not for new paths, but rather
> Each one jogs after his old father."

She had never seen any article of furniture which was not of village manufacture, and which, so far as taste and elegance

were concerned, might not have been manufactured centuries ago. Judge, then, of her surprise on finding herself surrounded by all the inventions and appliances of modern luxury. Her simple and artless exclamations, as the use of all that she saw was explained to her, afforded Mr. Leslie that calm and placid feeling of satisfaction which we all feel in the society of our inferiors, when they are respectfully demonstrative of their consciousness of our superiority.

She was almost afraid to venture to speak. Mr. and Mrs. Leslie both spoke Scotch after a fashion, but it was quite a different dialect from that to which she had been accustomed. It was not the quaint language of clowns and fishermen, but that courtly old Scotch which was once heard in the ante-chambers of Holyrood, but which is never heard now-a-days save from the venerable lips of the last survivors of a past generation.

Such people as the Leslies, with their national customs, language, and peculiarities, are fast passing away. Railroads, steamers, and constant intercourse are assimilating

the north with the south, and rendering Scotland a mere province of England. The national kirk, with her stern, inflexible Presbyterian features, the reflected image of her founder, who never feared the face of man, and a different system of law, are almost the only relics of her past nationality. The children of the upper classes, educated in England and accustomed to the service of the English Church, have lost all attachment to that simple ritual according to which their forefathers were content to worship, and submit to be dissenters in Scotland that they may be sound churchmen in England. The ministers of the National Zion, deprived of the moral countenance and personal attendance of the gentry, have no stimulus to keep pace with the science and literature of the day, and cultivate only those arts which serve to make them popular among their illiterate congregations. The Elizabethan age of Scottish clerical literature is past, and on reading the memoirs of such men as Carlisle and Somerville, we feel that there were giants in the land in those days, giants in intellec-

tual stature, compared with whom their successors have degenerated into a race of pigmies. A certain power of declamation and a stentorian voice are far better recommendations to any congregation in Scotland at the present day than the learning of a Robertson, or the accomplishments of a Blair.

Mrs. Leslie at once undertook the task of reforming Marion's speech, and of pruning it of all local exuberances. If she had trusted more to time, and less to her own skill, she might have succeeded better, as the only effect of her lessons was to make Marion reserved and taciturn. The poor girl knew that, so long as she remained silent, she was beyond the reach of reproof, and, when compelled to answer, confined herself to the use of the fewest possible words. She thus sank in Mrs. Leslie's estimation, as that well-meaning but not over-wise preceptress expected gratitude where gratitude is seldom felt.

The kind old laird, however, partly from a spirit of contradiction, and partly from genuine good-heartedness, took to the girl

the more when he saw that his wife was turning against her; he encouraged her to speak her native dialect, and perhaps the most enjoyable hours in Marion's life at the Castle were those she spent with the laird in his portrait gallery. For once he had found a listener, patient and credulous as his heart could wish; and as a pent-up stream flows irresistibly when it finds an outlet, so flowed the eloquence of the worthy laird, descanting on the deeds and virtues of his forefathers, from the days of the Crusaders downwards. It was quite true that Marion did not understand one-fourth of what she heard, but the laird never thought of examining her, and was satisfied with a tacit assent and a patient hearing, which was more than he was accustomed to receive from most of his visitors, who usually made their escape as soon as they heard of that Sir Roger de Leslie, who was one of the bearers of the heart of the Bruce to the Holy Land, and became the founder of the family. Even Mr. Hamilton, kind and courteous as he was to all, pled some pressing engagement when the laird began

to enter into the labyrinthine intricacies of the Leslie genealogy.

Marion was an attentive listener. She was herself a Leslie, and therefore, as it appeared to the laird, not exposed to that mean jealousy and envy which made all allusions to the family pedigree disagreeable to his neighbours. The girl was a Leslie, and felt all that interest in her forefathers which the scion of such an ancient house might be expected to feel. There might be something in his mode of reciting the deeds of his noble ancestors calculated to charm the ear and to arrest the attention of all unprejudiced hearers, but on the whole he was content to believe that the interest of the subject was the great secret of the interest which it excited in the hearer.

Mrs. Leslie had been the first to propose that Marion should be received as their adopted child, and considered therefore that it was her special task to train her for the position which she was about to occupy. However generous and well-meaning, the good lady herself was not very well qualified for breaking in a high-

spirited girl to the decencies and decorum of good society; nor was Marion always disposed to submit tamely to the instructions of her aunt. She was ready to do anything dictated by a spirit of love, but she had been too much accustomed to have her own way in the fisherman's family to resign her own will readily to the dictates of another, or to allow herself to be treated as a child, in which light Mrs. Leslie was disposed to regard her. She thought herself capable of eating her dinner without being solemnly instructed as to the exact way in which she should hold her spoon or use her fork; and Mrs. Leslie, perceiving that her instructions were not received in the docile spirit to which she considered them entitled, and that Marion showed a decided preference for the society of her uncle, began almost to repent that she had ever dreamed of transforming a rude village girl into a correct young lady.

Marion had another cause of unhappiness. She was sincerely attached to the Kynoch family, and retained a grateful remembrance of the great kindness which

they had shown to her when a friendless orphan. If she had thought that her removal to the Castle would have put a stop to all intercourse with them, she would have hesitated to accept her uncle's offer, and might have preferred a life of contented obscurity to renouncing those who had so many claims upon her gratitude. It was injudicious conduct on the part of Mrs. Leslie thus abruptly to sever all the ties which bound Marion to her early benefactors; it would have been far wiser to trust to the influence of time, and new ideas, and associations, gradually to effect the change which she had so much at heart.

But the good old lady thought that all her teaching would be lost if Marion were allowed to continue to associate with the Kynochs. Possibly, if she had known them personally, she might have judged more favourably of them, but she identified them with a class, her ideas of which had been formed by hearing the men brawling and swearing as she passed the village ale-house, or observing their children grovelling like

young pigs in the muddy streets. Thus it happened that when Marion had more than once expressed a desire to visit the Kynochs, Mrs. Leslie had taken her to task on the vulgarity of her ideas in still wishing to associate with those who were now beneath her notice, and whose society could only serve to confirm her in the use of those colloquial errors which she had been at so much pains to correct. She requested her never again to allude to the subject, under the penalty of her displeasure.

The spirit of the poor girl soon began to be depressed; the snatches of song and outbursts of girlish hilarity with which she had enlivened the fisherman's cottage, were no longer heard: she became constrained in manner, reserved, and melancholy. She felt like a bird removed from the green woods and the free air of heaven, and imprisoned for life—she had lost her power of song.

The only opportunity she had of seeing the Kynochs was at church. The pew of the Inverchewan family overlooked the humbler one occupied by the fisherman's

family, and she could see them in their usual places, all except Alice, who was unable to attend. With every desire to profit by the service, she found herself often looking at the Kynochs' pew, recalling the many incidents connected with her past life, and longing to be as she had been before this greatness was thrust upon her.

At length her altered looks attracted the laird's attention, and he strove, in his awkward, kindly way, to discover the cause of her depression. One day when they were walking together in the portrait gallery, and the laird was enlarging as usual on the heroic qualities of the defunct Leslies, he observed that all the attractiveness of the subject, aided by the honest enthusiasm of his eloquence, failed to make any impression on his niece, who appeared *distraite*, listless, and indifferent to all Leslies, past or present.

"Marion, my bonny lass, I am thinking you are no very weel. The doctor will be across to-morrow, and we will just ask him to step in and see you."

Marion assured him that her health was excellent, and that she did not require the doctor's attendance or advice.

"What is the matter with you, then, my lammie? Is it Mrs. Leslie that has been bothering you wi' her haveril nonsense about genteel manners, and all that stuff? Never you take to heart anything that she says, my dear. She has been schooling at me for twenty years, and she has just left me where she got me."

Marion affirmed that Mrs. Leslie's lessons had not caused her any unhappiness, and that she ought rather to be grateful to her for the trouble which she had taken in improving her manners.

"What is the matter, then, with my bairn? You should tell me, for, you see, I am just the same as your father. Poor Frank! I shall never see him again. Mony a fecht we had when we were at schule, and he had generally the upper hand, though I was the eldest. But he was aye a perfect deevil for fechting, as the French and the smugglers kent to their cost. He had something of the old Leslie blood in him.

When you smile, Marion, you bring back his face to me, as he was when a boy thirty years ago."

This allusion to her father touched Marion's heart. She knew that the laird meant to speak kindly of his only brother, though his reminiscences had something of the ludicrous in them. She had never seen that father, and she felt at the moment that her uncle was entitled to the confidence which he invited.

"Oh, uncle! I know it was very wrong of me to be discontented after all your kindness. I feel it very much, though I cannot express it as I should. My aunt, also, is very kind, and I wonder that she can be so patient with such an awkward girl as I am. But what grieves me is that I have never been to see the Kynochs since I left their cottage. They must think me very proud and ungrateful. But, indeed, it is not my fault; I have often wished to pay them a visit, but my aunt says that it would not become one of my rank and station to be intimate with vulgar fisher-people. I was just one of themselves, and if we

were vulgar, we were very happy, for we never knew it. But, surely, even if they *are* vulgar, I ought not to forget their past kindness."

"Phew!" said the laird with a low whistle, "I thought it was Maggie's doing. Bless you, lassie, she could not be prouder if her father had been a duke, or had royal blood in his veins, whereas everybody knows that he was only a paper lord, who was gayen fond o' the bottle, and married his own cook. Never you mind that, maybe she was not a match for a Leslie, but I dinna complain. We go on together pretty well, though you could scarcely expect one of her origin to have proper respect for the Leslie family. We never quarrel except about our own kin, for she is foolish enough to think a paper lord as good as an ancient knight. Ha, ha! ye might as well compare a tod with a lion. But dry ye up your tears, Marion, my bonny lass, and if it be a fair day to-morrow, we shall take a walk together in the direction of Loanhead, and, maybe, we may call in upon the Kynochs without Maggie being a bit the wiser."

"Oh, uncle! you are so kind. But would it be right for me to go against the wishes of my aunt?"

"Oh, she will never ken onything about it. I am glad to oblige you, but I am gladder still to cheat Maggie. It will be a secret between you and me, and when you see me wink at dinner, that will be as much as to say, 'Maggie disna ken.'"

The prospect of seeing her old friends was too inviting to allow Marion to entertain any scruples upon the subject. She felt that it was wrong to hurt their feelings by the appearance of neglect, and while she would not have ventured to call upon them without the consent of her uncle and aunt, she was only too glad to avail herself of her uncle's offer to conduct her to-morrow, to Stormy Jack's cottage.

Fortunately, next day was as near an approach to a fine day as the lieges of Islayhead ever experience, and the laird and Marion stole out without exciting Mrs. Leslie's suspicion. In truth, that lady was only too glad to be quit of them, for it was one of her grand cleaning days, when she

was in the habit of hunting the laird from room to room, attended by a bevy of serving maids, armed with brushes and mops, till at length he was unhoused, and obliged to take refuge in the picture gallery, where he could bid defiance to his assailants. She told them, on parting, that they might stay out as long as they liked, and the longer the better, as there would be only a cold dinner, which could wait.

The laird and Marion enjoyed their walk across the fields very much. He was provided with a long pike staff, sharpened at the lower end, with which he waged war on all the thistles and other weeds which beset his path, so that Marion had abundance of time to enjoy the bracing sea breeze, which brought back the colour to her pale cheeks. The laird pointed out, with a feeling of pardonable pride, the boundaries of his estate, and reminded Marion that some day all this would be hers.

"I thought once that Harry would have stepped into my shoes, but it has been otherwise arranged. Do you know, Marion,

I am getting as fond of you as if you were my own daughter. My only objection to you is, that you are a lassie, and not a laddie."

"Well, uncle," said Marion, "you see that is not altogether my fault."

"Na, na, I am no blaming you; you were never consulted in the matter, but it is hard that all these broad lands should go to anyone who does not bear the name of Leslie."

"But I do bear the name of Leslie, and it is a name which I never wish to change."

"I have heard thousands of young lassies make the same declaration, but I never knew one of them refuse a good offer when it came their way. But it will be time enough to think of that when you are a few years older. I have just one promise to ask from you, and that is, that you will either marry a man of title, or a gentleman who will be willing to change his own name for that of Leslie."

"I do not think myself fit to be the wife of any grand gentleman—I am only a simple country girl, fit only to be the wife of one

educated and brought up as I have been myself. I have been thinking of late, uncle, that I should get better on if I were sent to school. I should learn better if I were with other girls of my own age. My only fear is, that they would laugh at me because I am so ignorant and so awkward."

"Well, Marion, I am of the same opinion, for, between you and me, Maggie is not the best teacher you could have. '*Elle sent la cuisine*,' as I once heard the Countess of Nosinair say, when Maggie's back was turned. I knew what she meant, and when her eldest son was standing for the county, I plumped in favour of the other candidate, and kept him out. I met her on the way from the hustings. She turned her head away in anger, but I lifted my hat politely, and said, 'Cela sentait la cuisine, Madame, n'est ce pas.' She knew the meaning of my vote after that, and has been wonderfully polite to Maggie ever since. So I would wish that no one should ever make the same remark about you. I would wish you to receive the best education which money can procure—but oh! lassie, I would

be loth to part with you! You are all that is left to me, now that poor Harry is in heaven."

Marion took his hand and kissed him tenderly. She felt that the old man loved her, and that, beneath all his quaint manners and eccentric habits, there was concealed a gentle and loving heart. She assured him that she would never leave him unless he wished it, and that she would be to him in all things as a daughter.

They had now reached the village of Loanhead, where the laird was well known and generally liked. The rudest fishermen touched their red worsted caps, and gave him a friendly welcome to the village; the fisherwomen made as near an approach to a curtsy as their well-laden creels would permit; and even the urchins sprawling in the mud unrolled themselves like young hedgehogs, and stood up to see the gentry from the Castle. The laird had a smile and a kindly word for all, and Marion had the good sense to treat all whom she met as if no change had taken place in her own position. She thus disarmed envy, and conci-

liated the good opinion of those who would have sneered at her if she had given herself the airs of a fine lady.

John Kynoch and Ninian were at sea, and Mrs. Kynoch, after *sorting up* the the house, and placing the family dinner on the fire, had gone to visit a sick neighbour. Alice was thus alone. She was delighted to see Marion; and the two young girls had so much to say to one another, that they forgot the presence of the laird, who was surprised at the change which had come over his niece when she found herself in her old home.

Alice blushed, and apologised to the laird for her rudeness in not asking him to be seated. The laird felt that they would be *gênées* by his presence, and expressed a desire to examine a collection of Arctic curiosities brought home by Ninian, the fame of which had reached the Castle. He knew that they were *ben the house—i.e.*, in the other room on the same floor—and that the two girls would thus be left alone.

Marion and Alice had so much to tell one another. They became as they had

been before—they forgot for the moment the great gulf which separated them. The sight of Marion seemed to give new life and animation to Alice, who forgot, in the excitement of the moment, her own weakness, so much was she rejoiced at receiving back her own darling unchanged. Marion explained how it was that she had been so long in visiting them—sparing her aunt as much as possible, and concealing, of course, the nature of her objections to the continuance of their intimacy. But Alice saw it all, and felt that Ninian's case was almost hopeless. It was not likely that he would ever attain a position to satisfy Mrs. Leslie's ambition.

An hour had passed away very rapidly. The laird had been amusing himself examining two stuffed Polar bears, a unicorn's horn and teeth, sealskins, and other objects preserved by the sailors as *souvenirs* of their visits, when a knock was heard at the door. The visitor evidently considered that he had no occasion to stand on ceremony: the door opened, and Adam Mackay, the miller, entered.

On seeing Marion he at once assumed an air of reverence and respect, and treated her as if she had been a grand lady. The young girl shrunk instinctively from these demonstrations of respect: she felt, without knowing why, that they were not sincere, and that the man was her enemy. She had never liked him. She remembered that she had once heard him curse her father's name and memory, and though she was only a child, she had never forgotten it. There are a few facts of our early childhood which are never erased from the memory or dimmed by subsequent impressions, and she retained a painful remembrance of his words. She drew herself up with dignified reserve, and addressed her conversation entirely to Alice.

The miller perceived that he was *de trop*, and perhaps for that very reason would have forced his society upon the young girls, had he not discovered that Mr. Leslie was in the house, by observing his hat, which he had left in the kitchen.

"Oh! I see you have the laird here. I'll just step ben and see him. He and I

are old friends, and no doubt he will be glad to see me."

When the miller entered the room where Mr. Leslie was, the latter did not exhibit any appearance of gladness at the sight of his old friend. On the contrary, he looked annoyed, and confined his attention to the objects he was examining, without taking any notice of the profound bows which the miller made on entering. The laird was not ignorant of the feelings of enmity which old Mackay entertained towards him and his family, and, as he dreaded his cutting sarcasms and malicious tongue, he always avoided his society.

But Mackay was not a man to understand or to take a rebuff. He felt a malicious pleasure in annoying the laird, and pricking him in those parts where he knew him to be most vulnerable.

"Hoot awa', Inverchewan—do ye no' mind on yer auld schule-fellow, Adam Mackay? Mony's the day that you and I trued the schule to catch minnows in the Black Water; and awfu' leatherings we got from auld MacTawse, the dominie. I think

I hear you roarin' yet, as he gied ye skelp after skelp, till he peghed and swat again. Ye were never very gleg in the uptak mair than mysel'."

"You will be good enough to spare me these reminiscences, Mackay. It was very foolish of my father to send me to such a school. I got on better in England."

"Nae offence, laird, nae offence. I dinna ken gin ye gained muckle by yer schulin' in the Sooth. I am thinkin' it was just the same wi' you as wi' ane o' my calves that suckit twa kye. It never was worth its feed."

The laird took no notice of this frank but far from flattering comparison; and the miller, nothing abashed, proceeded :—

"This is a great change for Marion. I aye said to John Kynoch, 'It is a shame, John, for these Leslies, who hae rowth o' walth, to leave a puir man like you to bring up Frank Leslie's bairn. But nae doubt,' said I, 'John, some day Inverchewan will claim her, and pay you weel for her upbringing.' Ye see I have been a true prophet."

"I told my man of business," said the poor laird, wincing beneath this fresh attack, "to pay John Kynoch any reasonable sum for the care he had taken of my niece. I was sorry to find that he had refused it."

"The greater fool he; John disna ken his ain interests. He generally maks me his manager in a' business matters, and ye can pay over to me, for his behoof, the money which you thought he refused."

"I must refer you to my man of business."

"I micht as weel try to tak breeks aff a Hielanman as get a plack frae auld McWyllie. It would tak a cleverer chield than me to gar him loose his purse-strings. But, Inverchewan, it is kind o' you to bring the lassie back to see her auld freens, who were longin' to get another sicht o' her. Some folk, who sall be nameless, were beginning to claver and to say, 'The Leslies are owre prood to lat Marion come back to see the Kynochs, who had the upbringin' o' her.' But I kent better. 'Na, na,' says I, 'the Leslies are no' so prood as that; what hae they to be prood o'? The laird maun hae

a short memory if he has forgotten that his grandfather, who bought the land, was a cowper, that cowpit kye in ilka market north an' south.' Mony's the story, laird, that's tauld o' auld Stately your grandfather. I was but a laddie herdin' the nowt, but I mind on ince seein' him pass wi' a drove for the Sooth, and a big burly carl he was. Few wad ha' liked to try a shak fa' wi' him. I was a gey supple callant, and helpit to keep the drove thegether. When I turned back, he pat his han' in his pouch and took oot a saxpence. 'Here,' says he, 'my little man, as lang as ye keep that, ye'll never want siller.' Ah! laird, ye hinna the headpiece o' auld Stately; he could tell wi' a single glance o' his ee the weight of a steer within a pund or twa; he was the best judge o' nowt in a' the north country. If it had na been for him, there wad never hae been a Leslie at Inverchewan."

The miller's reminiscences were far from pleasing to the laird, tending, as they did, to dismount him from his favourite hobby, and to trample on his most sensitive intellectual corns.

"You mistake, sir," he said, with angry dignity; "there were Leslies at Inverchewan before my grandfather, as there have been after him. He had a taste for cattle-dealings as many other country gentlemen had at that time; but he traded in them only to improve the breed, and to oblige his friends, and not for his own benefit. There have been Leslies who were general officers, counts of the Holy Empire, and members of the Scottish House of Peers."

"Oh! I dinna doot, just as there hae been Mackays, who were verra grand folk, nae doot, and made a hantle o' noise in the warld in their day; but the deil a ane o' them wad hae claimed kindred wi' auld Adam Mackay, the muller o' Loanhead. Na, na, laird, binna ashamed o' yer forbears. It is just as honerable to hae a kye cowper for the founder o' yer family, as ane o' thae thievin' sornin' rascals that won their lands wi' their claymores, and keepit them by no better richt."

"You allow your tongue strange liberties in thus daring to speak evil of dignities. I

regret that the low tastes of my grandfather should ever have given occasion for these calumnies about the meanness of our origin. The portrait gallery at Inverchewan Castle tells a different tale."

"Ha! ha! the portrait gallery at Inverchewan Castle! Set him up wi' his portrait gallery and his Castle! I venture to say that there was never a Leslie o' your kith an' kin that had his portrait drawn afore auld Stately. Maybe ye wad hae liked to see him in a coat of mail; but he preferred being painted wi' the red Kilmarnock and the hodden grey coat that he wore till the day o' his death. Oh! I could tell you many a story about auld Stately. It happened ince——"

The anecdote of old Stately was for ever lost to the world. The miller had gradually drawn nearer and nearer to the laird, as the conversation became more interesting, till at length he stood directly opposite to him. Mr. Leslie had a habit of holding his snuff-box open in his hand, as if doubting whether to take another pinch, or to replace it in his pocket; and he was standing in this

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attitude when the miller began his anecdote. Snuff was a luxury in which the miller never indulged, except at the expense of others, and, tempted by the opportunity, he inserted his dirty fingers in the laird's gold snuff-box. This was more than flesh and blood could stand. He threw the snuff angrily into the fire and left the room, but not before he had heard this parting salute from the miller:

"Auld Stately, the coo-cowper, wadna hae closed his sneeshin' mull to a freend. Dinna haud yer head so high, laird, ye will, maybe, be glaid to come to me some bonny day for a pinch. Deil ding doon pride, I am skunnert wi't."

The laird heard little of this parting address. He was not a man of hasty temper, and on most points was of a forgiving disposition, but to question the antiquity of his ancestry was to wound him in his tenderest point, and to inflict an injury which he could never forget. He bade Alice good day with stiff and somewhat constrained politeness, and hurried Marion from the house. He spoke little on the way

home, and that on indifferent subjects. Marion felt that something had occurred to offend him. She was afraid to allude to the subject at first, but at length she timidly said,

"Uncle, are there not some people that we dread, without knowing why? I never did the miller any harm, but I am sure he hates me and my name."

"He must be a bad man who hates you, Marion—that sweet face of yours would disarm enmity. There was some old quarrel between your father and him about smuggling. He was very rude to me today, and I think Maggie was right. It is better to keep away from these Kynochs, and the sooner you go to school the better."

So from that day it was decided that Marion should be sent to school.

The old miller, proud of his victory, remained on the field of battle till Ninian and his father returned. He said nothing to any of them about his quarrel with the laird, because he knew that they would be displeased with his conduct. On the contrary, he remarked how fortunate it was

that he was there to do the honours of the house to such a distinguished visitor, and exhibited such an unusual hilarity, that they were led to believe that his interview with the laird had been of the most pleasing character.

When he was about to leave, his eye happened to fall upon some large haddocks which had just been brought ashore. He stopped to admire them, and after taking up three of the choicest, and weighing them one after another, he said,

"Weel, o' a' things that come out o' the sea, commend me to a gude fresh haddock. I care naething for your dry, sapless, smokit Findans, but gie me the fine, fresh, caller haddies, wi' the taste o' the sea aboot them—that is what I like."

"You had better take one of them, uncle," said Ninian, who had been looking on with an amused air.

"Thank ye, thank ye, Ninian. I'll no refuse a gude offer. And yet I am no sure —I dinna think I'll tak' it. Auld Ailie, my housekeeper, has a tongue like a razor. If she saw me coming back wi' ae fish, she

would be saying, 'John Kynoch must have had a puir tak' last nicht, or he wudna hae sent ye hame wi' ae haddock.'"

"Take the whole three, uncle," said Ninian, who saw the drift of his uncle's speech.

"Oh! Ninian, ye *are* a fleechin' loon. I canna resist that tongue o' yours. I'll e'en take the three. Ailie will be a prood woman the night when she sees me come back wi' them; no that she cares a doit for the value o' the fish, but she aye likes to see her maister respeckit and kindly treated by his ain kin."

"All right, uncle, I hope Ailie and you will enjoy them—there are plenty more where they came from. I'll just pass a cord through their gills, and then they will be easier to carry."

Ninian seized a coil of rope, which might have cost several shillings, and after passing the loose end through the gills of the haddocks, was about to cut off what he considered a sufficient length, when his uncle hastily seized his arm.

"Stop, stop, laddie. Never cut a rope

gin ye can help it. The sma' bit wad be a loss to you, and no gain to me, so I'll just tak' the haile rope, for the sake o' economy. I am goin' to ask ye a' to dinner, as soon as I hae fixed the day wi' Ailie. I wish ye a sound sleep and a blythe wakening."

Accustomed as he was to the miller's sordid avarice, Stormy Jack could not witness, without something of indignation, this abstraction of his three best fish, and of his coil of rope; and turning to Ninian with a puzzled, half comical air, he said—

"He is as greedy as a dog-fish, and as ill-mannered. He is poorer than we are, Ninian, with all his wealth."

"Never mind, father, we have the comfort of knowing that Ailie and he will have a good supper for once in their lives."

CHAPTER III.

A FEW days after the events recorded in the previous chapter, Ninian resolved to pay a visit to his former teacher, the schoolmaster of Loanhead. He had been reflecting on the story related by Alice, and debating in his own mind whether he possessed the talent and energy to enable him to attain the same success as its hero. In any ordinary difficulty he would have consulted Mr. Hamilton, but he knew that having recourse to him would oblige him to lay bare the secret motives which were at the root of his ambition, and he shrunk from any such revelation. He wished to conceal his heart's wound from all the world, and he imagined that he might obtain the benefit of old Stirling's advice without revealing the causes which made him

dissatisfied with his present condition. There was, perhaps, also in his mind a lurking idea that there was some royal road to social greatness more accessible than a college curriculum, and that a man of Stirling's extensive knowledge of the world might be able to point it out. One more experienced might have suspected that one who was shipwrecked himself was an unsafe pilot to guide him over the stormy sea of life, but Ninian had all that respect for Stirling which ingenuous youth cherishes to its early instructors.

The reader may anticipate Ninian's visit, and accompany us to the establishment where learning was doled out to the rising generation of Loanhead in such small quantities as suited their capacities. The schoolhouse stood on a slightly rising eminence about a mile from the village. The person who built it had done so on the strictest principles of economy, without any attempt at architectural display. In simple language, it was exactly one of those huts described by Captain Burt in his letters from the North of Scotland, written in 1726-7—letters to

which Macaulay is mainly indebted for the description of the state of the Highlands at the accession of William III. to the English throne. There was this difference, that, while the huts described by Burt were circular in form and unprovided with chimneys, the school-house was shaped like an oblong, and adorned with an orthodox outlet for smoke, but the walls of both were built of mud, and the roofs composed of turf, so thickly overgrown with grass as to afford a plentiful meal to any stray sheep that was venturous enough to climb to such elevated pasture. Not that the pasture was so very elevated, for the walls were not more than five feet high, and a very tall man might have placed his hand on the top of the chimney, from which proceeded a thick, compact column of palish white smoke, locally known as "peat reek." There are two small windows on each side of the hut, but the light they admit is very imperfect, as most of the panes of glass have been broken, and their place supplied by compressed bundles of rags.

Let us open the door, which, like the

sluggard's, creaks on its hinges, and enter. The room is so dark that it takes some time before the eye can distinguish the different objects which it contains. The air is hot, stifling, and unwholesome. No wonder, for in this room there are upwards of a hundred children, packed together as closely as soldiers on parade—children of both sexes, and of all ages, between three and ten, seated at two desks, which extend from end to end of the room, and support their little arms and books.

The benches on which they are seated are so high that the smaller ones, whose feet cannot reach the ground, would be in danger of tumbling down, were it not for the compression which effectually prevents any such casualty.

The smoke circulates in thick volumes along the roof before it finds an outlet by the chimney. The rafters or "couples" which support the roof are covered with soot, and, as the rain is not quite excluded, occasionally drops of a black, unsavory liquid drop down on the desks and books. These are hailed with perfect delight; small

fingers are at once dipped in them and find their way to the face, imparting to the urchins a ludicrous resemblance to high-caste Hindoos. Sometimes a small finger obliviously mistakes its neighbour's nose for its own, and then there are angry words and blows, which are unheard and unnoticed amid the Babel of sound, for each child roars out its lesson at the top of its voice, and roars out a great many things besides its lesson.

The presiding genius of the scene is seated on a high stool close to a blazing fire of "peats." He feels himself monarch of all he surveys, and regards his subjects with a grim smile of satisfaction. So far from checking the noisy clamour of his pupils, he encourages it by voice and by gesture.

"Ay, ay," he cries, with a hoarse voice, which is heard like the word of command amid the din of battle. "Roar louder. Lift up your voices like a trumpet and cry aloud. Bark like a pack of hounds, as you are; snarl and bite, tear and fight, it does you good, you little devils! It rejoices my heart to hear it, and 'Jacqueline' also

is glad. Ah! 'Jacqueline' will pay a visit to some of you presently!"

"Jacqueline," a leather strap, burned at the end to make it harder, with numerous knotted thongs attached to it, is brandished in the air, as if meditating a descent—"Jacqueline," so named after his foreign wife, whose tongue is the *tawse* of his existence.

Stirling is in rather a savage humour this morning; not that he is ever very amiable, but his temper has been sorely tried to-day. He does not stand as he usually stands, erect as a trooper, before the fire, rubbing his long, straight, stalwart limbs. He dreads the fire as a burned child dreads it, for he has been almost blown up.

Every urchin has to bring a peat from the peat stack at home to supply the fire at school. It is carried beneath the arm, and becomes inconvenient to those who have to carry it for miles. Some young Proudhons had discovered that it was easier to help themselves from the village grocer's stack, which stood conveniently near to the school, than to carry their peats all the way from home.

This arrangement worked admirably, till the selfish grocer, finding that his stack diminished far more rapidly that his own consumption would warrant, had recourse to an ingenious stratagem to prevent this pilfering. He dug small cavities in a number of peats, filled them with gunpowder, and covered them so neatly that the youngsters, who, as to the rest seldom examined the peats very closely, had no suspicion of the trick.

All went on in the school as usual; the noise was at the loudest, the schoolmaster encircled the fire with his huge limbs, and "Jacqueline" was threatening a descent, when a sudden explosion scattered the burning turf through every part of the room, and did still worse damage to such parts of the dominie's person as stood in its way. With a savage oath he rushed from the room, and soon after re-appeared dressed in his Sunday clothes, those he usually wore being discarded *et pour cause.*

It might have faired ill with the young ones, had he not been accompanied by the two Jacquelines—the one the object of their

dread, the other of their affection. Not that the tall, bony, beetle-browed, black-eyed Frenchwoman, who now entered the school-room, was a person likely to win the love of children, or to act the part of their protecting angel, but she hated her husband with a perfect hatred, and, to spite him, often interfered in their behalf. They knew, when the living Jacqueline entered the room, that the other Jacqueline would be placed in abeyance.

"Ho ça! mes enfans, voilà un beau tour que vous venez de jouer à mon mari à moi. C'est dommage que vous ne lui avez pas fait sauter la cervelle. Je n'en serais pas fâchée moi. You fear de whip, n'est-ce pas? But there will be no whip to-day."

The children knew little of what she said, except that the one Jacqueline had saved them from the other, and they rejoiced accordingly. A few minutes after she had left the school, the noise was as loud as ever, and Stirling, with the cowed air of a savage animal that has found its master, looked on, but did not dare to strike.

Soon after a little pale-faced girl came up to him and said,

"Please, sir, may I go out—I feel very ill?"

She was not feigning illness, the close air and the excitement had been too much for her, and no one with a spark of kindness in his nature would have refused her request. But Stirling rejoiced in torturing all weaker beings that were subject to his power; it seemed as if cruelty were the only luxury which he thoroughly enjoyed, and his position afforded him too many opportunities of indulging his savage humour.

"You feel very ill? How fortunate that I have studied phlebotomy, and can let blood better than any of your village leeches. I will put you right in a trice. I have got my lancet here."

He felt beneath his desk, and produced a rusty sickle with an edge like a saw. At the sight of this instrument the child trembled, and grew pale.

"Now, my dear, draw up the sleeve of your dress, and I will relieve you of a few ounces of blood."

As the child showed no desire to unbare her arm, he seized her as if with the inten-

tion of operating upon her immediately; but this was too much for her weak frame, she gave a piercing shriek and fainted. He rubbed his hands with savage glee, as if he thoroughly enjoyed his own brutal humour, and told two of the bigger girls to carry her out into the open air. The children, accustomed to his brutality, were only too glad that they themselves were not the immediate objects of it, and laughed with unfeigned delight at the scene they had just witnessed. He only wanted a pretext for selecting another victim, and marking one urchin whose laugh was louder than the rest, he threw Jacqueline with such accuracy of aim as to hit him exactly in the face. The descent of Jacqueline was the augury of a worse evil, and the offender trembled, less for the injury he had received than for that which he knew to be imminent.

"Ah, poor Jacqueline! she has had a fall. Look at Littlejohn, what a good heart he has—he is sorry for Jacqueline, because she has fallen; pick her up tenderly, my boy, and bring her here."

Littlejohn stooped down and picked up Jacqueline. Stirling fixed his eye sternly upon him and drew him towards him, as the rattlesnake does the charmed bird. The boy advanced with a wriggling gait, as if some irresistible power were drawing him backward. When he reached the desk, Stirling exclaimed, with the air of one on whom a pleasing duty had devolved—

"Now, my boy, you shall have your reward. Jacqueline is not ungrateful. Hold out your hand."

The boy held out his hand, though not with the expectant joyful air of one who was about to receive a reward, and Jacqueline descended with full force. The other hand was extended, and met with the same reception. This was repeated again and again, but there was no cry from the brave little fellow. There was an occasional twist of the features, and once or twice he rubbed his hands hurriedly on his trowsers, but, on the whole, he bore himself like one who felt that his character for endurance was at stake, and if he had been the son of Spartan parents he could not have shown a greater

mastery over the sensation of pain.

At length Jacqueline was laid aside from pure exhaustion, but the punishment was not finished. Stirling was as ingenious as an Indian devotee in devising new tortures, and rejoiced in every invention of cruelty. Littlejohn was placed, like another Simon Stylites, on the top of one of the desks, and commanded to stand for an hour on one leg; if the other leg touched the desk before that time, Jacqueline would rush to the rescue. There were scores of observant eyes watching him, and plenty of little voices ready to denounce him, if the wearied limb descended from its horizontal position. It is said that the cruelest masters are those who have been slaves; it is natural that it should be so—a fellow-feeling does not always make us wondrous kind, notwithstanding the poet's assertion.

The sensation created by Littlejohn's punishment soon passed away, it was too common an event to leave any very lasting impression. The noise gradually waxed louder and louder, and Stirling sat and looked on with grim satisfaction. He laboured under

chronic attacks every night of that newly invented disease of dipsomania, which is a far more respectable disease than old-fashioned drunkenness, and in the hands of skilful practitioners may do yeoman's service, saving the drunkard from the effects of his drunkenness, and rendering him an object of pity, and not of blame. He was in the habit of sleeping off the fumes of his potations in school, but it was dangerous to act on the supposition that he was asleep, because he often pretended to be so when he was really awake, and woe betide the unlucky offender who was caught tripping!

As the noise increased, he seemed gradually to sink into a comatose condition. One eye closed, then the other, the head bent forward once or twice and recovered itself with difficulty; at length it sank upon the desk, and Stirling was asleep, or at least was presumed to be so. There was a dead silence in the school, as if the sleeping tyrant inspired them with more awe than when he was awake. At length one more venturous than the rest stole up to him, and drew Jacqueline from his unre-

sisting hand. The instrument of punishment was borne off in triumph, and was sportively used by the victor, in imitation of Stirling, upon one of his comrades who volunteered for punishment. Another approached the pot which was boiling on the fire, lifted the lid, and peered in through the smoke to see what the dominie had got for dinner. The inspection was not satisfactory, and, in order to improve the cookery, he dropped a handful of sand into the pot, and carefully replaced the lid. Littlejohn's leg reached the desk as soon as Stirling closed his eyes, and Littlejohn himself, to show that his limb had suffered nothing from its unusual tension, began to dance a hornpipe. Another urchin had crept up to the door, and with one eye on the latch and the other on the sleeping dominie, was quietly opening it, when, to his horror, Stirling suddenly started to his feet! He was so transfixed with terror, that he stood in the same position, with his hand on the latch, without making any attempt to escape.

The noise gradually ceased like a peal

of thunder dying away in the distance. Stirling stood erect, scanning with his eye the trembling children, and preparing to select a victim. He had just fixed his eye on the culprit at the door, and was about to pounce upon him, when a sudden knock arrested him. This knock had much the same effect on the children as a reprieve might be supposed to have on a criminal when he feels the noose tightening round his neck; it gave them a respite, and, with the hopefulness of children, they deemed that the worst danger was over. Jacqueline was thrust aside in a corner, and the frown of anger on Stirling's face gave place to a faint approach to a courteous smile as he hastened to the door. On opening it he found that Ninian was his visitor. He expressed himself glad to see him, and inquired whether anything pressing had brought him there at an hour when he was engaged with his duties.

Ninian apologized for disturbing him, and said that he would call on some future occasion when he was disengaged; but the schoolmaster's curiosity was excited, and he

requested him to wait till he had dismissed the school. Meanwhile, the scholars had got quit of their former terror, and the fun was as fast and furious as ever. Stirling stealthily opened the door a few inches and peeped in. Littlejohn had placed on his head a venerable wig, used by Stirling as a fool's cap, and was dancing the hornpipe known as Jacky Tar, descending first upon one knee and then upon another, with a dexterity which said much for the suppleness of his limbs. Others were imitating, but fell far short of the original, while the rest stood by, nodding and shouting their noisy applause.

"Ah, Littlejohn, you will soon have to dance another kind of hornpipe, with Jacqueline for your partner. I'll gar ye claw where it is no bitin'."

Littlejohn's chorographic exhibition was suddenly arrested, and he slunk away, having evidently no desire to renew his acquaintance with Jacqueline. Stirling's presence and voice soon restored order. He turned again to Ninian—

"I seldom condescend to the Doric, but

these young heathens understand nothing else. I may say of them, in the words of Horatius Flaccus—a good poet but a poor soldier—that they are '*addicti jurare in verba nullius magistri*,' which old Macskelp used to render, 'They dinna care a doit for ony auld dominie.' But they care for Jacqueline—they all love Jacqueline—and Jacqueline loves them like a mother. She warms their hands when they are cold, and makes their blood circulate when it grows stagnant through too much sitting. But come, Ninian, this shall be an '*albus dies*' for them, for your sake. Throw aside your books, and clear the floor for a dance!"

This proposal was met with a shout of applause. Those trembling little hearts in a moment forgot their sorrows and their tears; the desks were pushed aside, partners were selected, and all stood ready for the dance. No race—not even the negroes—are so passionately fond of dancing as the Scotch, or so utterly oblivious of self in the excitement of the dance. The "hough!" of a Highlander when his blood is heated, is a sound worth hearing, and the tempera-

ture of India cannot restrain his saltatory tendencies when he hears the sound of the bagpipes. The Kirk has solemnly set her face against this secular amusement, but those who would never question her authority on other subjects, have stood out for the liberty of the floor.

And it is wonderful how well the Scotch peasantry dance; it seems to come natural to them. Ply an English labourer with beer till he lays aside his sheepishness and takes to the floor, and the chances are that he will indulge in such awkward, clownish movements, stamping first with one foot and then with the other, and holding his body awkwardly forward as if he had no command over it, that the spectator is glad when the performance is over; but place a Highlander on the floor, and make the bagpipes strike up the reel of Tullochgorum, and his feet will keep time to the music without an effort, while the gracefulness of his movements might excite the envy of a professional dancer. The Celt, if inferior to the Saxon in more solid qualities, has a decided superiority in the chorographic art.

Stirling entered the small room attached to the school-house, which served as parlour, bedroom and all, and returned accompanied by the living Jacqueline, who usually graced the dance with her presence. He carried, in a green bag beneath his arm, a time-worn violin, the sight of which set the little legs a-moving in anticipation. He screwed his strings, and rosined his bow, and went through all the orthodox forms usually observed on such occasions, till at length he had reached the proper pitch, and then struck up one of those lively strathspeys, the sound of which brings back, to Scotchmen in distant lands, the red bloom of the heather and the elastic bracing air of the mountains. Jacqueline beat time with a tambourine, and encouraged the dancers.

"Danse, young savages, danse and be happy! C'est ça; ça me fait rappeler la belle France quand j'etais jeune fille. Plût à Dieu que je ne l'avais jamais quittée pour un vieux seclerat comme toi. Mais qu'y faire? C'etait mon destin. Danse, my children, danse, and forget your sorrows. Shout with joy as if life were a *fête*! Faster,

faster, vieil vaurien, and I will bring you a glass of the *vin du pays*—what you call wisky, Ninian, n'est ce pas?"

Ninian nodded assent, and Stirling, encouraged by the prospect of the coming stimulant, struck up that lively measure known as the "Deil among the tailors," which set the young limbs a-moving faster than ever. Reel succeeded reel in rapid succession, till musician and dancers were both exhausted. The scholars were then dismissed with a parting admonition to be more careful in the selection of their peats. In a moment they were gone, scouring off in different directions like a pack of hounds breaking cover.

The pot was removed from the "crook" by which it was suspended over the fire in the school, and carried to the room occupied by Stirling and his wife. On removing the lid, the nostrils were saluted by a savory odour, which augured well for the contents. Stirling added to his other avocations, lawful and unlawful, that of poacher, and there were few gentlemen's preserves in the neighbourhood with which he was not

familiar. Madame Jacqueline had all the skill of her country in the concoction of a savory *potage*, and turned to the best account the partridges, pheasants and hares, which he brought home after his nightly excursions. Ninian was invited to partake of the soup, and took his place at the table, as it would have been deemed rudeness to refuse. Stirling said no grace, because, as he assured Ninian, an old soldier accustomed to campaigning, should never say grace before but after dinner, he having once seen a comrade's head whipped off by a cannon-ball, when he had sat down to his meal, and had reached the half-sentence—"For what we are about to receive." It was, perhaps, fortunate that he did not say grace, for the first spoonful of soup which he took was followed by a volley of curses, which startled his wife, accustomed though she was to such outbreaks.

"Qu'est ce que tu des donc, mon mari?"

"Do not taste the soup, Ninian. Jacqueline, those imps of darkness have thrown sand into it and spoiled our dinner! If I

knew the offender I would skin him alive, the young scoundrel! But I shall find out, and then woe betide him!"

Jacqueline indulged in a few expressions far from complimentary to "*ces jeunes sauvages*;" and Ninian expressed his sympathy as best he could, though he could scarcely repress a smile at the ingenious method adopted by Stirling's pupils to avenge themselves for his cruelties. Fortunately the dinner did not altogether depend upon soup—there were ingredients in the pot which the sand could not spoil, and Stirling soon forgot his anger in discussing the savory morsels which his wife fished out for him.

After dinner his wife drew out from a secret cupboard, the door of which was concealed by a quantity of peats, built up like a wall, a tin vessel capable of containing several gallons. The powerful odour which it exhaled left no doubt as to its contents—it was whisky, manufactured on the premises, without the payment of malt or any other tax. She seized an earthen bowl, filled it to the brim, and handed it to

Ninian, who had scarcely tasted the spirit, when he was seized with a violent fit of coughing, which obliged him to push it aside. It was still hot from the worm, and so strong that none but a seasoned devotee of Bacchus could have drunk it.

Madame Jacqueline witnessed this act with disgust—she thought it unmanly to refuse good liquor.

"Fi donc! jeune matelot. Never refuse thy cup. It is sweet and nourishing as thy mother's milk."

To shew that she was sincere, Madame Jacqueline raised the bowl to her head, and held it aloft so long that her husband half-instinctively moved from his chair, as if to challenge his own share of the liquor. After imbibing about one-half of the contents of the bowl, she replaced it on the table with a sigh, as if she parted from it with reluctance.

"Why, Jacqueline, what a thirsty soul you are! You have almost emptied the bowl. You should drink fair."

"If I were not a thirsty soul, is it that I would live—avec un vieux chameau pourri

comme vous. Is it for love that I live with you? Is it that I love you?"

"Never mind, old girl," said Stirling, finishing the bowl; "never mind whether you love me or not. I am not at all particular. You love me quite as much as I wish. We both love good liquor, and that is the only kind of love which never dies out. Is not Jacqueline a handsome woman, Ninian?—something different from your broad-backed, flat-soled countrywomen. She is the conquest of my spear and my bow. When the allies captured Paris I captured her. I had to pass my sword through the body of a French cuirassier before I could call her my own."

"Ah! mon pauvre Eugène," said Madame Jacqueline, wildly pushing back her hair, and bursting into tears—tears due quite as much to the strength of the whisky as to the strength of her affection for Eugène; "c'etait un beau garçon—quite different from the brutal man that you are!"

"Well, Jacqueline, you were present, and you know your Eugène got fair play—but still he fell. He was not equal to me

as a swordsman. We cannot judge now whether he was superior to me in anything else. It is easy to make invidious comparisons between the living and the dead. A living man may be proved against a living man, but a dead man cannot be brought to such a test. So we shall leave Eugène alone. Perhaps when he was alive you were about as fond of him as you are of me."

Jacqueline confined herself to the remark that it was beneath her dignity to take any notice of the *grossièretés* of such a man; and Ninian, who had felt ill at ease during this conjugal altercation, proposed to Stirling that they should retire to the school-room, which they accordingly did.

CHAPTER IV.

Ninian had some little difficulty in breaking the subject which was nearest his heart to the schoolmaster. Like people similarly situated, he talked upon every other subject with the greatest volubility, keeping nervously away from the question, which he scarcely ventured to ask.

Stirling knew human nature too well not to perceive to some extent how the matter stood. He saw that the young man had something upon his mind which he was unwilling to divulge, and that he required some encouragement to induce him to lay aside his reserve. Actuated partly by kindness, but still more by a feeling of curiosity, he said,

"Come now, Ninian, my lad, there is no use beating about the bush. You did not come here to-day to talk to me *de omnibus rebus et*

quibusdam aliis. There is something upon your mind—I can tell it by your very look. You have got into some difficulty, and there is a woman in the case. Ah! when was there ever a difficulty where there was not a woman in the case? With the natural bashfulness of youth, you shun mentioning the name of your fair enslaver. Ah!—the ingenuous modesty of youth! I have long survived it, but I can still sympathise with it. Speak out, young man—I know something of the world and of the sex. You might find a worse adviser than old Stirling."

"I have come to you, sir," said Ninian, respectfully, "because you know a great deal more about the world and its ways than we simple villagers. There is no one else whom I can consult. I have confidence in your superior judgment and kindliness of heart."

Stirling was somewhat softened by these compliments. He specially prided himself on his knowledge of human nature, by which he meant all that is base, selfish, and corrupt in humanity; but his philosophy

took no account of the higher and nobler principles and tendencies which still survive in this world of ours, and may be found among all classes. He was one of those so-called knowing ones who really know very little, because all their knowledge is one-sided, being confined to the darker phases of life, while they have no eyes to perceive the beams of light from heaven which still irradiate the ruined temple of humanity.

"Well, Ninian, you might go further and fare worse. I have seen a little of life. I have looked upon both sides of the picture, and can tell a hawk from a handsaw; so speak out, my lad, and my advice, such as it is, is at your service."

Ninian hesitated for a moment, as if he found it difficult to overcome his natural reserve, or to give shape to his thoughts. At length he said—

"Mr. Stirling, I want to be a gentleman."

"A natural and laudable ambition. I have felt the same desire from my earliest youth, and have tried in every way to gratify it. I have been at times unfortunate. I have received many hard knocks from

that fickle jade Fortune, but I have always been a gentleman."

"I know that you are very learned, and know much more than any of your neighbours, but I do not think that turning schoolmaster, even if I had the head for it, would bring me nearer my purpose."

Stirling laughed heartily at this *naïf* confession. None despised his profession more heartily than himself, or could be more sincere in expressing his sense of the hardness of his fate in being reduced to such a humble means of gaining his bread.

"So you think a dominie's rusty black coat cannot cover the back of a gentleman. *Parole d'honneur*, as we used to say in Flanders, I am very much of your opinion The *ferula* may be a useful weapon of power, but it is not the magic wand which touches a woman's heart, and opens the door of her affections. Nay, nay, lad, never blush or look sheepish about it, I partly divine your thoughts. You are in love with one superior in social rank to yourself, and you despair of success, unless you can contrive to become a gentleman."

"That is pretty much how the matter stands," said Ninian, glad to be relieved from the necessity of further explanations. "I have no chance as I am just now. If I were a gentleman, it might be different. What would you advise me to do?"

"A gentleman, in my opinion, is one who has a good coat on his back—an easy manner, which makes him at home everywhere—a fair supply of money in his pocket, and his time pretty much at his own disposal."

"Then I fear I shall never be a gentleman. I am a rough cub, whom it would be difficult to lick into shape. I have never had a good coat on my back, or much money in my pocket. I have had to take my watch at sea in my turn, day and night, fair weather and foul, and I never feel at home except among people of my own class, who have a sprinkling of brine about them. I was talking over the matter with my sister Alice—Alice knows much more than I do, and I like to talk to her when I am in trouble. She knows the whole affair from beginning to end, and she

says that I have no chance of success, unless I become a gentleman. That is difficult, of course; but she told me a story of a ploughman, who loved one superior to himself in rank, and who raised himself to her rank by going to college and studying for the ministry."

"Well, to be sure," said Stirling, "a minister of the kirk is by courtesy a gentleman, but he is not exactly the man on whom a wealthy laird would bestow the hand of his niece. You see I know your secret, but it is safe in my keeping. When I was at college, old Prosody, the Professor of Humanity, used to call us gentlemen when he was in good humour, but when he lost his temper he abused us as roundly as old Mr. Flintlock, the adjutant, used to do the soldiers on parade—laughed to scorn the idea of our being gentlemen, and told us we were not fit to cobble old shoes. And frankly I think he was right. These phrases mean nothing, and count for nothing. A London maid-of-all-work calls the maid-of-all-work round the corner 'a young lady,' and the world can bestow no more distin-

guished title on the daughter of a millionaire. So far as regards the name, both are on a footing of equality, but the name deceives no one. A maid-of-all-work is just a maid-of-all-work, and nothing more, though John the footman should honour her with the title of marchioness. A country bumpkin is just a country bumpkin, though he wear a red cloak or a Geneva gown, and be treated with all the outward semblance of respect. No, no, my lad, the parsons may have their pick and choice among the daughters of wealthy grocers and spirit-dealers, but they must not fly at such high quarry as the daughters of the landed gentry; so, if you aspire to the hand of some damsel with gentle blood in her veins, you must e'en think of some other profession."

"Then you can hold out no hope to me?"

"I am afraid not," said Stirling, thoughtfully; "what a pity, now, that you were not some three or four inches taller; you might then have enlisted in Her Majesty's Life Guards, and the regimental tailor and

the drill-sergeant would have done more to make you a gentleman than all the snuffy dominies and professors in Scotland. Not that sailors, however, ever make good soldiers, far from it; but then the dress is everything in a lady's eye. Ah, my lad, you little think now, on looking at this battered old body of mine, what a handsome fellow I once was; but those relentless Philistines, time and hard living, have shorn me of my locks of beauty, and left only the wreck of the handsome guardsman who was the cynosure of all eyes among the nurserymaids in the Park, and who occasionally received a passing glance of admiration from the fair riders in Rotten-row; and something of my old spirit revives within me as I think of my helmet and plume, my prancing charger, my clanking sword, and my tall boots. I might have married a fortune instead of that old virago of a Frenchwoman, if I had known how to turn my personal advantages to account. But destiny—my cursed destiny—has always been against me."

It is very convenient for those who have

ruined themselves by their own folly to make destiny their scapegoat, and to send her forth into the wilderness loaded with all the burden of their sins. Stirling sighed as he thought of the hard usage he had received at the hands of destiny, and sought consolation in a deep draught of whisky; this had a reviving effect, so that he ceased to inveigh against his enemy, and turned again to the matter in hand.

"One thing is quite clear, that you can never be a gentleman till you learn to walk properly. You flounder about in your walk like a Dutch galliot in a gale. A few lessons from me will teach you how to dispose of your legs when your body is in a state of locomotion. And then a little knowledge of music is an accomplishment which every gentleman ought to possess. All our officers at Knightsbridge played on some instrument; old Barker, who was for ten years the senior captain, played the French horn till he got blown himself and was obliged to give it up; and young Duhnéwassel played the bagpipes till he got a round robin, signed by the other officers,

requesting him, if he must needs play, to confine himself to the Scotch fiddle! Ah! yes; music *hath* charms to soothe the savage breast, and plant even in sailors mild humanity. You certainly do not look much like a troubadour, but a serenade skilfully given beneath the window of your ladylove might not be without a certain effect."

"I feel that you are laughing at me, which is rather unkind; so, as you can give me no assistance, I must wish you good morning."

"Not so fast," said Stirling, "'*festina lente*,' don't be in such a hurry. Youth is always so impetuous. I can do two things for you. I can teach you to walk and to play the violin; and if you have any taste for languages, I can teach you Latin and French, which you will find useful if you are still foolish enough to prefer a black coat to a scarlet one. Of course I shall not teach you for nothing; you are skilful in fishing, and I am skilful in teaching, so as I have nothing of the '*sacra fames auri*" condemned by the poet, I shall e'en be content

to take your fish as an equivalent for my instructions. You must lose no time, as you have been rather late in life in beginning."

Ninian was only too willing to grasp at this offer. It might lead to nothing; he was afraid that he was too old now to lay aside the rolling walk of a sailor, or to become an accomplished musician, but, by dint of hard labour, he might obtain such a knowledge of Latin as would qualify him for the entrance examination at college.

He concentrated all his powers on mastering "Ruddiman's Rudiments"—the Eton Grammar of Scotland. At first he made but little progress, a boy of ten years of age would soon have left him far behind. But light soon began to dawn upon him, the difficulties gradually cleared away, and being gifted with a clear head and a retentive memory, he soon advanced so rapidly as to excite a sort of grim satisfaction in his cynical teacher, who, of course, took large credit to himself for the result. The progress he made was the more surprising as

he had to labour at his calling, and to spend many long hours at sea with his father in the fishing-boat. But, in truth, the hours he spent at sea were those most favourable to study. Stormy Jack was naturally of a taciturn disposition, and would remain silent for hours watching the other boats, or gazing on the blue ocean, the sight of which is never without interest to a sailor's eye. Ninian would then stretch himself out on his face in the bottom of the boat, and give his undivided attention to the book which was spread out before him. That book was usually a Latin one. He was not without a taste for the literature of his own country, but he had the good sense not to indulge it for the present, as he knew that his whole success in life depended upon his proficiency in the Latin tongue. His friends were unable to supply him with the means of finishing his studies at college, and all his success in life depended upon his being able to translate a piece of English prose into tolerably classical Latin, at the annual competition for scholarships, or bursaries

as they are called, at the neighbouring university.

Labour, inspired by love, may effect anything. *C'est l'amour qui fait tourner le monde;* at least, it had that effect in the small but intense world of feeling and aspiration and undefined ambition to which Ninian had given himself up. Marion Leslie was never for a moment absent from his mind. He could see her peeping forth at times from the blue waves, and smiling her approval upon him, as he fixed in his memory the important grammatical fact that "*omne marem signans nomen decet esse virile*," or other facts of similar interest, which, without her inspiring presence, he would have found it difficult to master. He could see her through the long vista of the future, beckoning him on, and offering herself as a reward of his perseverance. It was she who enabled him to spend his midnight hours, after days of incessant toil, in conning the pages of the best writers of ancient Rome; for, incredible as it may seem, he had, in the course of twelve months, attained to this knowledge of the Latin tongue; it was

she who banished sleep from his eyelids, and gave activity to his brain, and supplied him with the clue which enabled him to trace out the mazy labyrinths of that ancient language, till at length he reached the upper ground from which he could look down with serenity on all the difficulties he had surmounted.

If some Oxford or Cambridge tutor should deign to cast his eye on this page, he may read it with a smile of contemptuous incredulity. The idea of a young fisherman, imperfectly acquainted with his own language, acquiring that of the ancient conquerors of the world in the space of twelve months, may appear to him too absurd to be entertained for a moment. Ninian could not have converted English into Latin poetry — an accomplishment, by the way, extremely rare amongst those gentlemen of our northern universities who bear the imposing title of professors of humanity — but he could read a Latin author without the necessity of having frequent recourse to the dictionary. He soon left his old teacher in the rear, and

Stirling confessed, with military frankness, that he had got all from him which he could give.

In a few months the competition for bursaries would take place at the neighbouring university, and Ninian was aware that, though he might know more of the Latin language than most of the competitors, he would have but a poor chance of success, unless he were able to turn English into Latin prose with tolerable correctness. He therefore gave his whole mind to this subject, but he soon found that he could do but little without the aid of a master, and unfortunately Stirling could render him little assistance. He was often tempted to give up his studies in despair, but the image of Marion shone forth in the distant future like a star of hope, and revived his flagging powers.

In this difficulty he bethought him of Mr. Hamilton. Hitherto he had pursued his studies almost in secrecy—the knowledge of them being confined to Stirling and the members of his own family. He had often thought of asking Mr. Hamilton's advice;

but he was afraid that he might divine his secret; and, strange as it may seem, he was more anxious to conceal it from Mr. Hamilton than from anyone else. With all his love for Marion, he had often doubts in his own heart whether the motive which influenced him in all his studies was such as would meet with the approval of one who was accustomed to weigh all things in the balance of the sanctuary, and to determine the character of actions by their relation to the future as well as to the present world. He felt, however, that he had now come to a point when he must either resolve to renounce his studies and her who inspired them, or make known his aspirations to Mr. Hamilton and ask his assistance.

He decided on the latter course, and had reason to rejoice that he did so. Mr. Hamilton was far raised above every vulgar feeling of curiosity, and forbore to make any inquiry as to the motives which had induced his young parishioner to enter upon a course of study so little in keeping with his age and circumstances. He confined himself to examining him upon the extent

of his knowledge, and was surprised to find that he knew so much; he was too candid, however, to conceal from him the fact that much remained to be done, and that his chances of success at the ensuing competition would depend very much upon the progress he made, during the interval, in Latin composition.

"That is my great difficulty," said Ninian; "I know when I have discovered the meaning of a Latin author, but I do not know when I have made a good version, because I cannot discover the faults myself, and I have no one to point them out to me."

"I shall be glad if you will come to the manse three evenings every week, and I will furbish up my rusty Latin, and give you what assistance I can. I am afraid, however, that my assistance will not be sufficient, as I did not study at the university where you intend to compete. You must know that Scotland has five universities, and each university has its own Latin. I question whether Cicero would come in as first bursar at any one of them, if the old Roman

had not mastered beforehand the stock phrases which are regarded as the essence of correct Latinity, and moulded his style into conformity with them. I might teach you to write tolerably good Latin, but it might happen that the Professor of Humanity, on whose decision your success depends, might differ from me, and it is of far more importance that you should obtain his approval than mine. I do not know his Latin style, but the teacher of the grammar-school in connection with the university *does*, and the best thing you can do is to lose no time in placing yourself under his tuition. You will have a full quarter with him before the competition comes on, and in the course of that time much may be done. I do not despair of seeing your name among the list of successful candidates, but I advise you not to be too sanguine. Above all things, keep cool when the decisive hour comes; much of your success depends upon that. You cannot enter at the grammar-school for some weeks yet, and I shall be very glad to look over your compositions, and give you whatever assistance I can."

Ninian thanked Mr. Hamilton for his kindness, and promised to avail himself of his assistance.

"My advice to you, Ninian, is to study and to pray without ceasing. You may not see the connection between the two habits, and many young men would scoff at the idea of successful study being in any way connected with incessant prayer, but I am convinced that there *is* such a connection. Whatsoever we ask shall be given unto us, if we use at the same time the proper means to obtain it; or, if we should fail to obtain it at the moment we wish for it, we know, at least, that there is some good reasons for its being withheld. I have forborne to ask your reasons for striving to elevate yourself to a higher position than that in which Providence has placed you. They must be strong and urgent, or you would not have exerted yourself so much as you have done. I trust they are such as will approve themselves to a higher power."

Ninian blushed, and Mr. Hamilton, perceiving his uneasiness, with his usual tact and

delicacy, changed the subject. Ninian now gave himself up wholly to Latin composition: he no longer accompanied his father to sea, or took any part in his former labours. On explaining his wishes to Stormy Jack, the father, though somewhat surprised that any man should prefer the life of a student to that of a sailor, offered no opposition, and consented that he should give all his time to his studies. Fortunately Ninian had saved enough of his earnings during the last voyage to be able to defray the quarter's expenses at the grammar-school, without being indebted to his father or any one else. He had fully made up his mind that, whether he failed or succeeded, he should never be under any pecuniary obligation to any one.

The three weeks speedily passed away, and Ninian embarked on a fishing-smack bound for the neighbouring university town. He was provided by Mr. Hamilton with a letter of introduction to the master of the grammar-school, and lost no time in waiting upon him. He found him a small man, dry and formal in manner, with a

parchment-coloured, expressionless face, and an utter absence of interest in any subject except Latin roots. He read Mr. Hamilton's letter, in which he explained Ninian's case, with a smile, half incredulous, half contemptuous; he questioned whether a self-taught fisherman could know much of Latin in twelve months, but was too prudent to express any opinion upon the point. After finishing the letter he folded it neatly and placed it in his pocket, and began to read the book which was spread out before him. An awkward silence of several minutes ensued, and Ninian was hesitating what he should do, when the schoolmaster, on looking up, became conscious of his presence and drawled out, "The fee is ten and sixpence."

This sudden transition from the abstract to the concrete, from the ideal to the real, took Ninian somewhat by surprise, and almost excited a smile, but he lost no time in counting out eleven shillings, and depositing them upon the table. The schoolmaster scanned them as closely as he would have done a doubtful line of Latin poetry, counted

them carefully over, and dropped them one by one into his pocket. He then resumed his book, and Ninian took his leave without his sixpence of change, not over-favourably impressed by the manners of his future instructor.

His first care was to provide himself with lodgings. The students at the Scottish universities are not provided with rooms within the walls of their respective colleges; they are allowed to live wherever they choose, and are free from all control on the part of the college authorities. So long as they attend three or four hours of lectures with tolerable regularity, they have the rest of their time at their own disposal, and may spend it as they choose. It may be easily conceived that this freedom from all restraint at the most dangerous period of life, is sometimes attended with baneful consequences; and the effects would be still more pernicious, were it not that the extreme poverty of most of the students acts as a safeguard.

The keepers of these lodging-houses are usually "lone" women, as they call them-

selves, from the Highlands, who take them on speculation. The most miserable animals have their parasites, and the Scottish students, poor as they are, are fed upon by these Highland harpies. They can only expect to let their lodgings for five months in the year, while the session lasts, and, of course, they must make hay while the sun shines. It must be confessed, however, that their sun is never very bright, and that all the hay they gather would scarcely satisfy the poorest gleaner in the south.

As the college did not open for three months, and the students had not yet assembled, Ninian had no difficulty in securing lodgings. For the small sum of eighteenpence a week, which included all extras, he obtained possession of a tolerably large garret, the window of which looked out upon the sea. It was this circumstance which determined his choice: he was not yet so buried in his books as to have lost all living interest in the ocean, which had been so long his home, and he found pleasure in the thought that, without rising from his table, he could watch the vessels as they left or

entered the harbour of the neighbouring town, or sailed along the coast.

He was far from being extravagant in his habits, and, poor as he was, he soon found out that there were other lads at the grammer-school still poorer. Their friends had raised a few pounds to enable them to try their chance at the approaching competition; if they succeeded in obtaining a bursary, the whole world was open to their ambition —if they failed, they had to return to the plough or the oar. Judge, then, how they laboured, and toiled, and what quantities of midnight oil they consumed during those three months.

Other things, however, had to be consumed besides the midnight oil. No overfeeding of the mind will fill an empty stomach, or satisfy the demands of a craving appetite. Those aspirants after academical honors could not appease their hunger with Latin roots, and their limited funds prevented them from indulging in any thing but the barest necessaries of life. Most of those who resided within thirty miles of the university town, were supplied with provisions by their

friends. Every fortnight the carrier brought them a supply of oatmeal, cheese and butter; and these substantial articles of home production were sufficient to satisfy their strong but not over-refined appetites.

Oh, my *confrères* of the southern universities, nursed in the lap of luxury, fed on the fat of the earth, familiar with wine parties and college cellars, overflowing with health, and youth, and enjoyment, ye little know the privations, the makeshifts, the struggles, the poverty and the hunger, which your less fortunate brethren in the north have to pass through, before they can take their place in the serried ranks, and do their part in the battle of life. If at times you see something that is rugged, rough and *bizarre* in your northern brother as he stands by your side, think of his previous training, and do not despise him. Beneath that rugged form there may be beating a generous and noble heart, and, when the hour of danger thickens, the soul tried by adversity will be faithful to the death.

All the northern counties had sent their contingents to swell the number of compe-

titors. Even the Orkney and the Shetland islands had their representatives. The lodger in the garret next to Ninian's was a young sailor from the Orkneys, who had saved sufficient money at the whale-fishing to enable him to try his luck at college. Poor Winchester! he was far from his friends, and fared worse than the others. No bags of meal, or jars of butter, or inviting cheese, came to appease his appetite, or to prove the kindness and sympathy of his friends. He had to fight the battle of life alone, and, like many others of his class, he fell bravely at the first onset; but we need not anticipate.

At first Ninian did not know who was his neighbour. The thinness of the walls enabled him to hear all that was passing in his room, and what he heard tended to excite his interest. That his neighbour was a student he could have no doubt; like many men accustomed to solitude, he was in the habit of reading and speaking aloud, and Ninian could not avoid hearing what he said or recited. Sometimes he would recite whole books of the Æneid or choice scenes from the Iliad, with an enthusiasm

which showed how truly he felt their meaning; nor were the English poets overlooked: Milton, and Pope, and Dryden seemed to be his special favourites, and his readings or recitations were sometimes protracted till an early hour in the morning.

Such a man might be an interesting, but he was far from being a pleasant neighbour. It was difficult for Ninian to fix his attention on his studies, when his neighbour was describing with stentorian voice the direful effects of Apollo's silver bow, the sorrows of Dido, or the councils of the lost angels; so one night he knocked at his door, and, without further ceremony, entered. He found a young man upwards of twenty years of age, in the dress of a sailor, reading aloud by the light of a small lamp, which, for convenience sake, was perched on the chimney. Like most of the Orkney men, he was short and thick-set, but frequent vigils and scanty fare had left their impress upon him. His clothes hung loosely on his attenuated frame, and the hectic flush which sometimes spread over his pale, hollow cheeks, proved that his days on earth

were numbered. He received Ninian with perfect politeness, and on learning the object of his visit, frankly apologised for the annoyance he had suffered through his heedlessness. The two young sailors found that there was so much in common in their habits, tastes, and circumstances that they soon became fast friends. Winchester had had the advantage of six months' training at the grammar school, and was far superior to Ninian in Latin composition. The latter, therefore, considered it a great boon to be permitted to prosecute his studies under the guidance of the more advanced student, and struggled hard for the approaching competition. The results of that competition must be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER V.

The momentous day at length arrived. The college hall was thrown open to the competitors, who crowded in with as much eagerness as if their success depended on securing the first places. The professors, preceded by honest old John, the college sacrist, carrying the silver mace, marched into the hall in slow and solemn procession, and took their places on the raised *dais*, from which they could survey the whole scene. The young lads gazed with wistful faces on the arbiters of their fate—there was nothing in their expression to reassure them; if they had been members of the Holy Hermandad, about to consign some heretic to the flames, they could not have looked sterner or more uncompromising. One little man with a brown wig, and what one of the competitors irreverently called a

"game leg," did make some feeble attempt at a joke, but he was at once snubbed by his stern colleagues, and shrunk into a corner, where he remained a silent witness of the proceedings.

Two plain deal tables extended from end to end of the hall, and the competitors seated themselves on wooden benches at these tables. Upwards of a hundred aspirants to university honours, varying in age from the schoolboy of thirteen to the schoolmaster of forty, took their places at the tables and waited in solemn silence for the reading of the passage of English which they had to translate into Latin.

Ninian, though not altogether free from the excitement occasioned by a day so fraught with important consequences to himself, had sufficient self-command to examine the appearance of the intellectual athletes against whom he was soon to measure his own strength. A more motley group could scarcely be conceived. It was not merely that they differed in age: the contrast in dress and features was equally striking. There, might be seen the descen-

dant of the ancient Norsemen, with flaxen hair and deep blue eyes—the red-haired, rawboned Highlander—the swarthy Celt from the Western Isles, with eyes and hair as black as those of his brethren born beneath a southern sun—and the quiet, cautious, canny Lowlander, who is usually accepted as the type of the national character.

Look at that man in the faded suit of black, whose dark hair is already partially snowed over by time, and whose nose and upper lip have the smallest *soupçon* of snuff upon them. You can at once tell, from his self-complacent, slightly pedantic air, that he is a schoolmaster.

You are right; our friend in the faded suit is Mr. Kenneth Mackenzie, teacher of the General Assembly's School, a mighty man in the island of Egg, dreaded by the rising generation of that remote dependency of the British crown, but of woefully little account in this irreverent, unappreciating university town, as he has already discovered to his intense disgust. A worthy man is Kenneth, pertinacious and pedantic it may

be, a "man of men," addicted to long prayers and strong whisky; but still a representative man, the type of a numerous class not to be found in any other country. Beneath that faded suit there beats a heart which has thrilled for years with a not ignoble ambition, and which has borne disappointment, not with stoical indifference, but with Christian fortitude. A quarter of a century has elapsed, Kenneth, since you first took your seat on these benches, a hopeful lad of sixteen, who believed that a glorious future was before you. A quarter of a century!—what changes have occurred in that time! how many have left the stage of time altogether, and of the survivors how many have appeared upon the scene in new characters, utterly different from the *rôles* which they selected in early life!

But a quarter of a century has worked no essential change in you, Kenneth. Time has powdered your hair, and wrinkled your brow, and changed the hopeful stripling into the middle-aged, care-worn man; has condemned you to the dominie's desk instead of the preacher's pulpit; has made you so

familiar with poverty that you have accepted it as the normal condition of your existence; but Time, with all his relentless blows, has not been able to crush out in your heart the great ambition of your life—the desire to be a teacher of men, a preacher of the Word in that guttural Erse in which you first learned to express your wants.

Again, Kenneth, after the lapse of five and twenty years, you have taken your seat on those benches. You tried and failed; you went home sorrowing, but not despairing. You have sacrificed all that makes life dear to man, from the desire to gratify the one absorbing passion of your life. You have bent over those Latin books till your back will no longer straighten itself up. You have saved every shilling from your miserable salary, save the sadly grudged sixpence to replenish your "sneeshin horn," the only luxury your life has ever known—saved and hoarded up, not from the miserly love of money for its own sake, but from the desire of being able at length to reach the goal of your ambition. Courage,

Kenneth, comfort each nostril with a reviving pinch, spread out the little portfolio—the same you spread out—oh! how many weary years ago!—arrange your papers and give the finishing touch to your pen—the goal will soon be reached, the self-denial of years rewarded, and the possession of 15*l.* per annum make you the happiest of embryo Gallic preachers.

Oh! Kenneth, the remembrance of thee makes me set all the laws of art at defiance, and expose myself to the just censure of even my kindliest readers, to say nothing of those captious critics who detect with eagle glance, and expose with mocking jeer, the smallest literary peccadilloes of those whose only crime is the desire to amuse. But I cannot help it, Kenneth. Are you now minister of Egg or Rum, or the other island of the West which gave you birth? Shall your eye read these lines, or has it been closed by that hand which shall one day close all our eyes? Oh! Kenneth, we trust you are alive and well, the husband of a happy wife, the father of stalwart Celtic sons, who, like their father, have sat on the

wooden benches, and have heard their names read out in the list of bursars at the college competition. If so, you will forgive the mischievous urchin who sat by your side, and who looks back with remorseful regret when he remembers the cuts he made in your scarlet gown, the hellebore he introduced into your snuff, and the other tricks which, in the wantonness of youth, he played on you, his unoffending victim.

Mais revenons à nos moutons. The competitors have taken their places, and the secretary of the university, a tall, erect, stern-looking man, slowly rises, and after surveying the assembly with as grave an air as if he were about to perpetrate a second massacre of the Innocents, reads from the paper which he holds in his hands the piece of English prose which is to be translated into Latin. It is the passage in Robertson's History of Scotland which gives an account of the escape of Mary, Queen of Scots, from Lochleven Castle. Never, perhaps, was the feeling of interest excited by the escape of that unfortunate queen so intense. Every word in the his-

torical narrative is eyed with suspicion, as if it were some snare to entrap the unwary tyro into "maxies"—the familiar name by which the worst kinds of blunders in Latin composition are known in our northern universities. The brains are cudgelled to discover the corresponding idioms in Latin —the fingers are twisted roughly through the unkempt hair, as if to drag forth by violence what will not come by gentler means —the eyes wander from the paper to the ceiling, and search there in vain for the expression which is not to be found within or without—Ainsworth's dictionary (why is Ainsworth—almost unknown in the south—the *arbiter elegantiarum* in all matters of Latin composition in our northern universities?), is searched with eager gaze and trembling hand, the quotations from the Latin authors, given as illustrations of the different meanings of the different words, weighed with anxious care — and Robertson's elegant prose gradually converted into such Latin as the competitors can command. The rapid scratching of pens gradually subsides into silence, and the competitors carefully

read over their versions, before giving them up to the attendant professor. Then comes the most trying and dangerous hour in the whole competition—a spirit of doubt and distrust takes possession of the mind, and woe betide the unfortunate competitor who, yielding to that spirit, begins to correct his version and to alter the Latin. He is almost certain to commit such mistakes as will place him at the bottom of the list, and lead him to question the truth of the maxim that second thoughts are best.

Ninian had taken his place between Winchester and Kenneth Mackenzie. His nerves were better strung — thanks to his previous mode of life—than those of his neighbours, and he managed to keep tolerably cool and collected. He wrote out his version carefully, striving rather to avoid mistakes than to produce very elegant Latin; and having finished his work he began to read it over carefully, when his attention was directed to his neighbours.

Kenneth, after the passage of English

had been read out, sought inspiration in his snuff-box, or rather snuff horn, for he carried his snuff in a ram's horn, mounted with silver. Holding with the poet, that a little snuff, like a little learning, is a dangerous thing, he replenished his nostrils with such ample pinches that he was obliged to have recourse to his handkerchief, and blew his nose with a sound so loud and prolonged that a general titter ran through the hall, and the indignant professor shouted "silence!"

Kenneth, on finding himself suddenly the cynosure of all eyes, and the object of general derision, shrunk within himself, and lost all mastery and self-command. In vain he tried to fix his attention upon the work in hand, or to regain the mastery over his intellectual powers; he shook and trembled like an aspen leaf, the tears began to roll down his cheeks, excited partly by snuff, but still more by mental emotion, and his feelings found vent in such expressions as, "Ochone! ochone! what is come over me now? The labour of twenty years lost, no to speak o' the

expense o' travelling. My head is in a whirl, and I hardly ken whilk end o' me is uppermost. Ochone! ochone! I must just go back again to Rum, and live and die a dominie. Oh! the siller, the siller, the siller, and the shame!"

Winchester was a man of a far higher order of intellect than the poor Highland schoolmaster, and retained his coolness and self-command till he had completed his version. If he had stopped short there, all would have been well, but on reading it over he thought that he could do much better, and began a fresh copy. Instead of aiming at a simple, easy style, he strained at something higher, and gradually got beyond his depth. Difficulties arose where all had been simple and easy, certainty gave place to doubt, and the second copy bore marks, such as would have been visible to any other eye than that of the writer, of the conflicting emotions under which it had been written.

But the second copy was at length finished, and Winchester was just giving the last glance at it, when his ear caught

the strange sounds and ejaculations proceeding from his neighbour Kenneth. The Orcadians are a kind-hearted race—the inhabitants of small islands usually are so—and Winchester did not belie the character of his countrymen. Speaking is sternly prohibited on such occasions, but he could not avoid turning to his neighbour, and asking him what was the matter.

"Ochone! ochone! my good shentleman," said poor Kenneth, "my head is in a creel, my brain is whirling round and round like the Pentland Firth in a storm. I have not written a single word of the Latin, and the labour of twenty years is lost. In vain have I toiled, and hungered, and struggled against poverty and want; my nerves have failed me in my hour of need, and I must e'en turn back the road I came. Ochone! ochone! what shall I do? Tell me what to do, or I shall go mad."

"Try to keep cool," said Winchester; "there is still time enough to finish your work, if you set earnestly about it."

"But I cannot begin. The words swim

before me, there is a mist before my eyes, and my fingers will scarcely hold the pen."

"What can I do for you?" said Winchester, good-naturedly.

"Oh! save me, save me! Give me the rough copy of your version. I swear that I will not copy it literally, but it will serve as a guide to me, and, with the help of it, I do not despair of being able to make a fair appearance. I know you can help me if you like, for you were pointed out to me in the college court as the one most likely to carry off the first bursary."

A sudden movement on the part of the professor interrupted the conversation, and Winchester good-naturedly handed over the paper to the miserable Kenneth, without stopping to weigh the morality of the act. If he had reflected for a moment he would have seen that the favour conferred on Kenneth was an act of injustice to others, and would have left the Highlander to his fate. But he took no time to reflect, and after giving

Kenneth the rough copy as he thought, he deposited the other on the table at which the professor was seated. He then left the hall.

Ninian rose soon after. He had written a clean copy of his version, without attempting many corrections, and approached the table where Winchester had placed his. He stood for a moment to fold up his paper neatly, and, while so engaged, his eye happened to fall upon Winchester's. He read the first two or three lines, for Winchester had neglected to fold up his paper, as was usually done, and took particular notice of one phrase, because it was different from the one he had chosen.

On leaving the college court, he found Winchester standing at the gate in the midst of a group of students, who had assembled to watch the egress of the competitors, and to exercise their critical acumen on the versions of such amongst them as chose to submit them to their inspection. Several voices called upon Winchester, who was known to them as the *dux* of the

grammar-school, to produce his paper, and he was excusing himself as well as he could, when Ninian came up. He still retained his sailor's dress, and, after a few jokes on his personal appearance, which he bore good-humouredly, a magistrand, or fourth year's student, exclaimed, "Well, Jack, my hearty, how have you passed muster? We know the coast pretty well, so if you show us your reckonings, we shall be able to tell you whether you are likely to reach port in safety, with a comfortable cargo of guineas on board."

As Ninian knew that the speaker, the son of a clergyman in a northern county, was the first bursar of his year, and had carried off the highest prizes at every subsequent examination, he gladly gave up his rough copy, in the hope that he might learn something of his fate. He had only read the first few lines when he exclaimed, "Ah, your ideas on the subjunctive might have found favour with Cicero, but they will not suit old Prosody, who will pardon anything but heretical views on this point.

Fortunately the decision does not depend upon him alone, the other professors have a voice in the matter, so we must hope that some of them hold the same heterodox views as yourself. Prosody will condemn you without a hearing if they do not come to the rescue. If they do, what a battle of words! what a Babel of strange sounds! May I be there to see!"

"Well, Winchester!" said Ninian, laughing at the sallies of the lively speaker, "you, at least, are a lucky fellow. There is no danger of Prosody consigning your version to the tomb of all the Capulets. You have avoided the error on which my hopes, if Prosody have a decisive voice in the matter, have been stranded. I glanced at your version before leaving the hall, and I observed that your ideas of the subjunctive differed from mine. I wish you joy."

"Your congratulations are somewhat out of place," said Winchester; "if our fate depends upon Prosody, I must be prepared to start for the Orkneys. The love of filthy lucre induced me to adopt his views

in my first copy, but it was so much against the grain, that on writing out the second copy—the one which I placed with the others on the table—I wrote such Latin as I thought Cicero would have approved of. I really could not find it in my conscience to write bad Latin for any consideration, it would have been doing evil that good might come. So you see, Ninian, we both sail in the same boat, and if she is swamped, we must both go down together, though it is hard to perish within sight of land."

"No, no, Winchester, you are all right; my eyes have not deceived me. I know your handwriting too well ever to mistake it. It was your version which I saw lying upon the table, and the boat you are sailing in is a much safer one than mine. I think I see the smile on old Prosody's face, when he glances at the first lines of your version, and discovers that one competitor at least holds the same views as himself on the subjunctive. You must have given in your first copy instead of the second, and it is very fortunate that

you did so. My chance is a poor one beside yours."

"It would be rather amusing if Winchester came in first bursar in spite of himself," said the magistrand, laughing. "But come, Kynoch, you must not lose heart. Fortunately, we have got some Cambridge men, who hold the same views as yourself on the subjunctive, and if your version is a good one in other respects, they will stand up for you."

The speaker, with a judicial air, proceeded to examine it. His verdict on the whole was favourable. He pointed out one or two expressions which might have been amended, but assured Ninian that his name would be near the top of the list. The other senior students who assisted in the examination were equally sanguine, and hope began to dawn again in Ninian's breast.

The inspection of Ninian's version had taken some considerable time, and the students turned to Winchester and asked him again to produce the second copy. He was excusing himself as best he could,

when their attention was directed to Kenneth Mackenzie, who was seen approaching with a far more hopeful expression of countenance than he had shown when Winchester left him in the college hall.

Kenneth was at once surrounded by the group of students, who, after sundry jokes on his venerable appearance, which he bore with great good-nature, called upon him to produce his version. Kenneth, after replenishing his nose from the ram's horn, and a fair show of modesty, drew from the well-worn portfolio the rough copy of his version, which was in truth only a second edition of Winchester's, altered in such a way as to escape detection. These alterations, however, were far from being improvements, and the verdict of the examiners was less decided than in Ninian's case.

Ninian and Winchester walked slowly home together. On reaching their lodgings, Winchester threw himself on his bed and burst into tears. The excitement of the day had left him in a state of nervous weakness, and Ninian did his best to rouse

him from his depression and to inspire him with hope.

"Come, Winchester, it is all over now, so rouse yourself and be a man. Do not give way to such weakness; strive rather to have a heart prepared for either fate. You are certain to make the best appearance to-morrow, for none of us can translate Latin into such elegant English as you can; and though the Latin version is the more important, you have really nothing to fear."

"It is not that which troubles me," said poor Winchester, "but I have been this day guilty of a dishonourable deed. I gave a copy of my version to that Highland schoolmaster. He looked so woe-begone that, when he asked me for it, I could not refuse him. I felt at once that I had done wrong, and though we may not be detected, I cannot forgive myself for having injured some other lad, who, but for me, might have been successful. It was almost as bad as robbery."

"Not quite," said Ninian, smiling; "you did it for the best without meaning to injure anyone, and after all nothing bad

may come out of it. The Highlander, in his conceit, has so improved upon your version that I am sure the likeness will never be discovered, and Kenneth's improvements are of such a nature that it is likely his name will not appear in the list of bursars at all."

"He looked so like the Knight of the Woeful Countenance, and his Celtic ejaculations of despair were so touching, that I really could not refuse him. If I fail, I shall feel that my failure is a just retribution for my folly."

"It will be time enough to talk of failure when it comes. A cup of Mrs. Macscrimpet's strongest tea will steady your nerves, and set you all right again. Then for a glorious sail in the bay; it is just the day for it. A few strokes of the oar will make 'Richard himself again!'"

Winchester was too weak to row, so he quietly seated himself at the helm, while Ninian's vigorous strokes sent the boat spinning through the water. The bracing sea-breeze, the noble expanse of ocean, the passing ships, and the distant view of the

city with its towering spires and ancient seat of learning, soon restored Winchester to his former self. He had the eye of an artist and the soul of a poet; the excitement of the day, and all the issues dependent on it, were forgotten in the enjoyment of the present; the inspiration of genius flashed in his eye, and the language of heart-felt enthusiasm rushed from his lips with such fluency and power that Ninian, fascinated by the speaker, leaned on the oars and listened. There the two young men, so lonely and friendless, sat for hours, till the chilly air of evening warned Winchester that it was time to return.

The second day's examination passed away without any notable event. A passage of Buchanan's History of Scotland had to be translated into English, and here Winchester had the advantage over all the others. His simple, elegant style met with the unqualified approval of the examiners at the gate, while Kenneth's Johnsonian periods and Ossianic magniloquence were received with shouts of admiration and

ill-suppressed laughter, which led the irate Highlander to snort forth: "Deil tak the ill-bred callants! If I had had the upbringing o' ye, I wad ha' pitten mair into ye wi' my leather tawse than a' your college doctors."

At length the third, the momentous day, arrived. Many eyes never closed in sleep throughout the previous night; it was like the eve of a battle—no one knew who would fall, or who would be crowned with victory. One-fifth, or so, of the competitors would be made men, as they express it in the north; the path of future eminence would be open to them, and all the advantages of a liberal education within their reach, while most of the rest would have to leave the seat of learning with heavy hearts and disappointed hopes, to sink helplessly into that obscurity from which they had struggled in vain to emerge, or to prepare for the competition of the following year, in the hope of better success.

The usually dull streets were crowded with students, competitors, and their

friends, who had flocked to town to learn the result.

That tall, thin, grave-looking man is a minister from the country, with eleven children, a sickly wife, and a hundred and fifty pounds a year. Those two stalwart youths by his side, with coats a world too small for them, are his two eldest sons, now on their way to the college hall to learn their fate. If they fail, a whole year is lost, for he cannot pay their expenses without the assistance of a bursary, and his heart is ill at ease, as he knows that, taught by himself alone, they have not had the same advantages of training as the others. In a distant moorland manse prayers are being offered up in their behalf by a pale, careworn woman, who clasps a babe to her breast, as she wrestles with Him who, as her simple faith teaches her, alone can give success. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; her Reuben, her eldest born, the pride of her heart, the hope of her old age, returns home with the sorrowing father, while the second, the scapegrace of the family, stands

high in the list of competitors, and remains to pursue his studies.

There is no mistaking the figure of that old man with the grizzly moustache and the stiff black stock. Apart from the scar which extends from the corner of the right eye to the chin, you might easily tell, by the erect form, the prominent chest, and the steady march, that he has borne arms. Ay, and borne them with far better effect than you, my carpet knight, who lean leisurely from the window of your club in Pall Mall, and think it a mighty feat to take part in an occasional review at Wormwood Scrubbs. You would doubtless wonder what ridiculous old quiz it was, if you saw him passing down Pall Mall, but let me tell you that that poor half-pay captain has done more for his country than you are ever likely to do. He is one of seven brothers, all of whom entered the army as gentlemen volunteers, at a time when fighting was serious work. None of them ever rose higher than the rank of captain, all of them shed their blood freely, four of them left their bones in Spain. Two of them have

died at their Highland farms—this is the last surviving brother. The fair-haired boy by his side is his only son. He fain would be a soldier like his father, but has yielded at length to the old man's wishes.

"No, no, my lad, the MacGrigors have shed enough of blood for their king and country—you shall serve a different Master."

He is intended for the Church, and it will be a proud day for old MacGrigor when he hears young Donald preach his first sermon.

Old dominies in suits of rusty black, small farmers with broad bonnets and coats of home-made hodden grey, crofters and labouring men in still humbler guise, plaided Highlanders with brogues of untanned leather, and other nondescripts, are wending their way to the college hall, mixed up with a crowd of students and competitors, varying in age from the child of twelve to the middle-aged man of forty.

The hall is crowded to suffocation. It is with difficulty that the professors, preceded by the old *sacrist*, bearing the usual insignia of office, can make their way to

their seats in the centre of the hall. One of the professors offers up a Latin prayer, which is listened to with rapt respect by the *béjaunes*, and received with cheers and Kentish fire by their seniors, one of whom, of acuter hearing or greater impudence than the others, exclaims, "That is a maxie!" —a discovery which excites the hilarity of his comrades, and almost makes the poor Professor break down. At length the Latin prayer is finished, without doing much harm or good, and the real business of the day begins. The venerable Principal, who has reached the last Shakspearian stage of human decrepitude, opens the ominous list, and clears his throat. The noisy clamour of the students is succeeded by the deepest silence; many are watching to hear the names of friends, others to hear the strange blunders which the Principal never fails to commit in pronouncing the names.

"The first bursary, of the annual value of thirty pounds, has been gained by James —James—Windwester."

"No Windwester appeared, though the

name was repeated through every part of the hall. The sub-principal seized the paper and read "James Winchester."

Winchester stepped forward, and his appearance was greeted with a general cheer, in which the other competitors heartily joined. He was congratulated by all the professors, except Prosody, who looked sternly at him, as a young man who held dangerous views on the subjunctive.

The Principal read out the name of the second bursar, "Naaman Kinloch," but no Naaman Kinloch appeared, and a general titter ran round the hall. The sub-principal again came to his aid, and Ninian felt a strange swelling at his heart as he heard his own name pronounced. With a face flushed with pleasure, he advanced to the place where the principal was seated, and was greeted with such approving shouts as "Jack's the man," "He has reached port at last," and others of a like complimentary nature.

"You are entitled to a bursary of 30*l.* a-year, tenable for four years, founded by the late Dr. Madden. Do you accept?"

Ninian had no hesitation on that point, and after answering a few simple inquiries about his age and the place of his birth, returned to his place beside Stormy Jack, who had come all the way from Islayhead to learn the result. A silent pressure of the hand, and a muttered prayer, showed how much he was pleased with Ninian's success.

Our old friend Kenneth gained a bursary of 15*l.*; enough, with his own limited savings, to supply him with oatmeal porridge, salt herring, an airy garret, and a limited supply of books. Kenneth never felt any of those compunctious visitings which troubled poor Winchester; he found it convenient to forget his obligation to the Orcadian, or, at least, he never alluded to it, and the latter was far too generous ever to remind him of it.

We need not dwell on the disappointed hopes of others—the sorrow with which many a poor father led back his son to his distant home, or the dull despondency which settled on the heart of the latter, when, renouncing his former studies, he resumed the plough, the spade, or the oar. Many,

however, are more sanguine—they will continue to toil, to labour, and to wait till another year; may their faith and hope be rewarded!

CHAPTER VI.

Four years have elapsed since Ninian gained his bursary. Four years! What changes have been effected, in the course of those four years, among the light-hearted youth who crowded the college hall—what changes in body and soul and intellect! All have grown more or less in body and in intellect—the unformed lad of fifteen has sprung up into the manly youth of nineteen—the mind whose highest feat was to translate a few sentences of English into Latin, has learned at least to know its own ignorance, and the vastness of the field of knowledge; and the soul—how has it fared with the soul? It also has grown in the knowledge of evil, and if it has been kept from gross sin, it has been more through poverty, and the not yet forgotten lessons of early piety, than through any of the

means adopted at our northern universities to preserve it pure and unpolluted.

The students assembled every morning at nine o'clock in the college hall for prayer. The student who acted as censor, an office which was taken in rotation, called out the names, and affixed a cross against all those who failed to answer. After this, the professor whose turn it was, offered up an extempore prayer, which was seldom uttered or listened to with much reverence. One little man closed his eyes and moved his lips, but no sound issued from them, and it was not unusual for one of the students, more venturous than the others, to place himself close to him and to listen in an attitude of profound attention. In vain he endeavoured to catch the smallest sound; the professor's devotional feelings were too deep for utterance, and it was only when the eyes opened, and the lips ceased to move, that the students knew that the prayer was ended. The other professors, knowing the character of their audience, kept their eyes open, and surveyed their pupils with mingled suspi-

cion and defiance, hurried over the prayer as if running a race, and esteemed themselves fortunate if they could finish it without having to call some one to order. In former times, the prayer was in Latin (it was doubtless as effectual in that language as in English), and if the professor had occasion to reprove the disorderly conduct of the students, college etiquette demanded that he should do so in that language.

Many ludicrous anecdotes were related of one member of the Senatus Academicus, who, having spent the early part of his life as a surgeon in the navy, was more familiar with the language of the forecastle than that in which Cicero pleaded and Horace sung. Expressions far from academical occasionally dropped from his lips, and when his Latin failed him, he had recourse to the vernacular, "Tu, puer, wi' the red head, qui lepidasti super deskium, solve down a sixpence," or "Visne sedem tenere? ye lang-leggit loon!" are specimens of the familiar allocutions which he addressed to the restless and the disorderly.

Monday was Black Monday to all defaulters. On that day the professors in their academical robes, and the students in their red gowns, assembled in the college hall at nine o'clock; the catalogue was called, and the usual prayer offered up. The catalogue was then submitted to the sub-principal, who proceeded to summon the defaulters in their alphabetical order before his august presence. "Grigori Macgrigor." Grigor advances with an air of well-assumed innocence, while his torn gown and short home-made trowsers, struggling not unsuccessfully to escape from the leather straps which alone prevent them from leaving his manly calves exposed to the public eye, call forth derisive shouts from his brother students. Grigor is an old offender, and need expect no mercy.

"Grigori, you are fined fourpence for being four times absent from prayers, and sixpence for being once absent from the Greek class."

"Ye'll excuse me, doctor, but I was only three times absent, so you are cheating me out of a penny."

"Be silent, sir! Learn to treat the college authorities with respect."

"Aweel, doctor, the penny is neither here nor there, so here's the siller; but will ye no' gie me a luck-penny?"

On this Grigor produced a purse apparently well replenished, and proceeded to pay his fines in halfpennies and farthings—a procedure which called forth indignant remonstrances from the sub-principal, and the threat of an additional fine.

"Na, na, doctor. Tak yer siller; it is the current coin o' the realm, and ye canna refeese it, or, if ye do, I'll be glad to tak' it back again."

We are indebted for this and other illustrations of student life in the north to a series of letters written by Ninian to Mr. Hamilton during his college course. As we are not aware of any work which gives a faithful picture of such life, a few extracts from these letters may not be without interest:—

"We are all very poor here. A minister's son, who receives 30*l.* from his father's stipend to cover all the expenses of a few

months' session, is esteemed a fortunate youth. He can afford to have a room and bedroom for himself and another student, who shares the expense; the higher bursars may also enjoy the same luxury, while it is not unusual for three or four of the poorer students to be crowded into one double-bedded room, which serves, also, for parlour and study. A room of this kind costs about five or six shillings a week, so that each student has to pay about two shillings a week, including attendance. Their butcher's bills are not very high; meat is a luxury in which few of them indulge except on Sundays, and most of them are content to live on the provisions supplied by their friends in the country, with an occasional haddock or herring, when fish are cheap. Brain work goes badly on with an empty stomach, and through physical privation and excessive study, the seeds of disease are often contracted, and lead to a premature grave. There is always something sad when the classes meet at the beginning of a session; a few old familiar faces are missed, and to the inquiry of

friends the usual reply is given, 'He overworked himself and died of consumption.' If the statistics of mortality among the students at our northern universities were known, it would be found that the field of intellect has its victims as well as the field of battle, and that an overworked brain and an empty stomach are as fatal to life as the sword or the pestilence.

"You have heard me speak of Winchester, the student from the Orkneys, who gained the first bursary. Poor fellow! he died at the close of the first session. I have never felt such deep sorrow at the death of any one. We were always fast friends, and Winchester was a man who won upon you the more you knew him. I believe he had no friends but an aged mother, who was not forgotten when he received the first moiety of his bursary at the middle of the session. He was a noble, simple-hearted fellow, a real gentleman, and much of a genius, with an eye for the beautiful in nature, and a heart to appreciate all that is great and noble. He literally worked himself to death, like a race-horse that falls dead when

it has passed the goal. No one ever practised more literally or faithfully the apostle's advice about keeping the body in subjection; not satisfied with subduing it, he unconsciously killed it. After gaining the first bursary he lived on the same poor fare as before, and retained his sailor's dress; the only luxury he knew was the luxury of assisting his mother, and adding to his collection of books. He came in first in Latin and Greek, and was able to hear his name read out in the college hall; but he never left his room again. He died a month afterwards.

"I was the only friend who stood by his bed-side, and closed his eyes. I could not find it in my heart to leave one who was so lonely and so ill, though I was longing to feel the sea-breeze, and to see my old friends at Islayhead. I never knew any man who had had to rough it in life, who retained so much tenderness of conscience; would you believe that his having lent his version to another at the competition, lay upon his conscience as a heavy sin? How few, at such an hour, would think of such

a thing at all, with other and heavier sins pressing upon the soul. But he fell asleep with the assurance that this and all his other sins were pardoned. His last words were, 'Bury me as quietly as possible, and send any money that is over to my mother. You have been a kind friend, Ninian, to one who never had another. God will reward you. Keep my Bible and my Homer, the two books I have liked best.' He had almost a public funeral; the professors and all the students who were in town attended. We buried him among strangers, but within sight of the dear old college where he triumphed and died. *Requiescat in pace*!

"There is something sad and touching in a soldier's or a student's funeral. Both die far from the place of their birth, and both are generally indebted to strangers for the last offices we render to those we love.

"You know my secret attachment to Marion Leslie. I am afraid when she returns from France she will not deign to look upon one *si bien bête* as she will find me. I feel that my case is almost hopeless,

and that I am as far from the great object of my life as ever. But I must still struggle on: the prize is worthy of more than I can give for it; and if I fail to obtain it, my labour will not be altogether in vain. My soul has been strengthened by reading of the heroes of antiquity; and if they, supported only by their own strength, could bear up against what they deemed inexorable fate, without repining, shall not I, the heir of exceeding great and precious promises, learn to possess my soul in patience?

"My passion for Marion has kept me pure in a place where there is much to defile. There is little sympathy between professors and students, and the intercourse between them is confined to the class-room. I am not surprised at this, for we are really a set of 'roughs,' unaccustomed to refined society, and ignorant even of its usages. We are, indeed, honoured with an invitation to breakfast once a session; but as the invitation is given and accepted only from a sense of duty, none enjoy it, and all are glad when it is over.

Ludicrous scenes occasionally occur from the ignorance or impudence of the guests, and the college court rings with laughter for a week after one of these breakfasts, at the remembrance of the droll sayings, or equally droll doings, of those who sought to distinguish themselves in social life.

"One of the professors confines his invitations to the Highland students. It is his proud boast that he has not a drop of Sassenach blood in his veins, and though he shews no antipathy to the fees paid by the Saxons, he carefully excludes them from his house.

"Such unjust exclusiveness begets discontentment, and leads to occasional acts of retaliation.

"No work is done in the class-room on the last day of the session, and the old man tried to amuse the students by holding up before them a series of engravings illustrating the ancient Greek mythology. There was nothing in them to offend the most prudish taste, and the exhibition of them might have

passed off without a remark, if one of the students, whose own morals were rather *louches*, had not stood up, and protested, in the name of his fellow-students, against this attempt to corrupt their pure minds. This protest was received with rounds of applause, and such cries were heard amid the uproar as, 'For shame, doctor!' 'At your time of life, too!' 'You old Highland goat!' 'I only wish Mrs. Mac were here! — would not he catch it?' The old man hung down his head with shame — a crimson blush of offended modesty circled slowly over his bald head, and a tear glistened in his eye. The engravings were restored to the portfolio, with the sorrowful words,

"'Gentlemen, I yield to you in this matter. We shall resume the usual work of the class.'

"The usual work of the class had proceeded for about ten minutes, when it was interrupted by a most faithful imitation of the prolonged yelping of a dog when his toes have been trampled on.

"'Stop, doctor, there is a dog in the class-room! He is mad! Put him out! —put him out!'

"A scene of indescribable confusion ensued—the students rushed to the door, and crowded upon one another so much that it could not be opened. At length it was partially opened, and with a parting kick, which elicited a prolonged howl, the imaginary dog was dismissed from the class-room. No more work was done that day; and, while such scenes are occasionally enacted, it is no wonder that the professors carefully close their doors against the students, and exclude them from all intercourse with their families.

"His Highland exclusiveness recently led to an act of retaliation of a less objectionable character. Invitations were issued in his name to some thirty or forty of the Highland students remarkable for their devotion to Terpsichore, to attend a dancing-party, on a specified evening, at his house.

"A dancing-party was an event in stu-

dent life, and created no small sensation. The fortunate few invited were objects of envy to all, save those who were initiated into the secret. On the appointed evening the guests issued from their garrets in costumes which, though they would scarcely have passed muster in Mayfair, were considered as being *comme il faut* in the remote Highland glens. The ringing and knocking at the doctor's door roused him from his usual *siesta*, and, rubbing his eyes, he asked old Davy, his servant, if the world was come to an end.

"'Oh! na, doctor, the world will last your time and mine, never fear. It is only a wheen o' young collegianers, who hae come here wi' their slippers to get a bit dance.'

"'Slippers! a bit dance!' the doctor muttered; 'the old man must be in his dotage, or he must be drunk. However, I shall soon solve this mystery.'

"The doctor hurried to the drawing-room, where the assembled guests were discussing the relative merits of the

fiddle, the piano, and the bagpipe, as instruments of music. Their nationality led them to decide in favour of the last of these instruments, and it was agreed that *faute de mieux*, if the doctor could not supply them otherwise, Donald MacDonald should be sent to his lodgings for his bagpipes, which he had brought with him all the way from Badenoch, to solace himself in his leisure hours. Donald was proud of the prospect of displaying his skill, for the remonstrances of his Saxon fellow-lodgers had hitherto condemned the bagpipes to an unworthy silence.

"The doctor's entrance interrupted their conversation; all rose to receive him with smiles, and expressed their pleasure at accepting an invitation which they were only debarred by college *etiquette* from formally acknowledging. The doctor was thoroughly mystified; he felt, if he did not exclaim, with the 'wee wifiky' in the song, 'this is no me,' he gazed helplessly at his guests, and looked from the floor to the ceiling, and from the

ceiling to the floor, for an explanation of the mystery. At length a happy idea occurred to him, and he at once acted on it.

"'Have any of you gentlemen a copy of the invitation which was sent to you?'

"The invitation was too rare and precious a document to be carelessly thrown aside. Several were produced, the doctor selected one of them, and slowly read:

"'Professor Mac—— presents compliments to Mr. Hamesh Mactavish, and requests the pleasure of his company on Thursday, the 19th, at eight o'clock. P.S. Reels and strathspeys. Be sure you bring your slippers.'

"The doctor could scarcely refrain from smiling at the terms in which the invitation was couched, but retaining his gravity, he blandly said—

"'So you have all brought your slippers, gentlemen? Well, we must not disappoint you of a dance. The difficulty will be to provide you with music and partners.'

"It seemed strange to the guests that the doctor should not have thought of and provided for this difficulty before issuing his invitations, but their respect for his person prevented them from expressing their surprise. Here Donald Macdonald came to the rescue, and modestly remarked that though he had never passed an examination before the College of Pipers, or received a license from that august body, he was no mean performer on the national instrument, and would be happy to give the doctor an opportunity of testing his powers.

" 'No, no, Donald,' said the doctor, good-naturedly; 'the pipes may be all very well in Badenoch, and no one likes the sound of them better than myself, but your performance would bring a mob about the house, so we must manage matters more quietly. My daughters will supply you with music. But how about the partners?'

"Donald and his comrades thought that the supply of partners could be obtained from the same quarter, as the doctor

had numerous daughters, rising gradually one above another, like an inclined plane; but Hamesh Mactavish whispered that it would be 'owre muckle honour for te likes o' them to tanse wi' the tocdor's tochters.'

"The doctor was exactly of the same opinion, though he did not care to hurt their feelings by expressing it; so with much tact he said, 'Gentlemen, I have heard much of the "ram reels" which you dance at the lobby. I have never seen these dances, and it would give me and my daughters much pleasure if you would just suppose that my drawing-room is the lobby and that my daughter at the piano is old John Ross, the blind fiddler.'

"As you studied at a southern university, you cannot be expected to know what is meant by 'ram reels' or the lobby. Ram reels do not mean the gambollings of rams, as the uninitiated might suppose, but reels in which the fair sex have no part. The lobby is a long, narrow garret at the top of the college buildings, without

any furniture save a few wooden benches and a sort of rough orchestra for the musicians. This lobby occupies as important a place in our college life as the pump room at a fashionable watering place. Most of the students subscribe to the lobby, and as the subscription is only a shilling, it is not a severe tax upon their limited means. The lobby is an institution, the origin of which is lost in a remote antiquity; it is supposed by many to be coeval with the university itself, the pious founder of which is said to have thought that there was a certain sympathy between the head and the heels, and that the students would use their heads all the better from occasionally using their heels. If such was his opinion, I think he was a very wise man, and the students ought to bless the worthy bishop, and to cherish his memory, for the dance at the lobby from eight to nine o'clock every Saturday evening, is the only relaxation they have from their studies during the week.

"The founder of this lobby must, doubtless, have been slightly tainted with

monastic asceticism, or may possibly have regarded dancing as a sort of religious rite; be that as it may, the fair sex are ungallantly excluded from these assemblies, and the only dances permitted are 'ram reels,' as they are facetiously called. There *is* a tradition that at one time the fair sex were not thus ungallantly excluded, and that the fairest beauties in the town occasionally graced the lobby by their presence; certain irregularities are said to have arisen, and to have led those academic bears, the senatus, to pass a decree by which the entrance to the lobby was confined to the students alone. It might be supposed that, after this ungracious exclusion, the lobby would have died a natural death, and so, doubtless, it would among a people less enthusiastically devoted to dancing than the Scotch are. The *senatus-consultum* did not kill the lobby, it only gave birth to 'ram reels.' You might fancy that these 'ram reels' were rather dull affairs, but I can assure you that they are far from being so. Oh! for the pencil of a Wilkie or the pen of a Scott that I

might give you some idea of a Saturday evening at the lobby!

"Follow me across the college quadrangle; enter this narrow door, take care you do not stumble on these dark stairs, higher and higher, till breathless we reach the top of the college buildings. Do not be frightened at that sound like small thunder, it is only the tramp of the feet of the dancers; nor at those wild shouts, they are only the outlet for Celtic enthusiasm inspired by the dance. We gently open the door and enter unperceived. The scene is at first dim and indistinct from the room being imperfectly lighted, but gradually the eye learns to distinguish the different objects presented to its view. There, close at hand to the right, is the orchestra; you perceive at once that the leader is blind, from the manner in which he rolls his eyes and beats time with his head and feet to the music.

"The organisation of the band would scarcely call forth the approval of the most distinguished leaders in the musical world, yet I question whether any per-

formance inspired by the magic wand of those *Dii Majores*, could have infused such enthusiasm into the hearts or such agility into the heels of the assembled youth. Much of the effect of music depends on association and habit, and dear to the Scottish youth as the blue clouds, the bracing air, and the blooming heath of their native mountains, are those lively reel and strathspey tunes which, learned in infancy, are never forgotten in after years, and sometimes, as in the case of poor Leyden, haunt the exile from home on his death-bed. There is as much difference between the strains of Verdi and Rossini and the strathspeys of Marshall and Gow as there is between the blue sky, the gently undulating plains, and the balmy air of Italy, and the cloud-capped mountains, the solitary glens, and the rough, boisterous winds of the north.

"The tramp of the dancers makes the old floor shake again. The iron-spiked brogues with which their feet are loaded are no impediment to the poetry of motion; the absence of the fair sex appears unfelt,

the wooden floor is beaten with hearty good will, and the loud 'hough!' of the Highlander proves how real is his enjoyment. The dance lasts only for an hour; your quickest reels, then, old John, let no time be lost, and then back to books or to bed.

"There is a strange initiatory rite practised by the magistrands or fourth year's men on the tertians, who are to take their place at the lobby next year. On the last Saturday of the session, the magistrands assemble in solemn conclave in the lobby; the doors are carefully shut, and the tertians wait outside till they are allowed to enter one by one. As I am one of the initiated, I may describe the rite to you.

"It is of a somewhat original character, and must have originated with some wag who had a coarse sense of humour. Some forty or fifty magistrands stand in double file, with their faces opposite to one another, and their left hands clasped so as to leave a narrow passage, sufficient to allow a person to pass in a stooping position. Each one holds a knotted handkerchief ready for

action, and stands in an attitude of earnest expectation. The door is slowly opened and an unfortunate tertian introduced. He is made to stoop and run the gauntlet, receiving from each magistrand as he passes a hearty salute, from which he endeavours to escape as quickly as possible. A sense of shame prevents him from divulging the secret, he stands quietly by to see the rest pass through the same ordeal 'et trouve toujours sa consolation dans les malheurs des autres.'

"This initiatory rite would be less objectionable, did it not sometimes happen that a tertian who may chance to be unpopular is subjected to rougher usage than the application of the knotted handkerchief.

"But I have almost forgotten the doctor and his unexpected guests. The ram-reels were danced, though with far less zest than usual, the dancers at last pled fatigue as an excuse, and, after enjoying the doctor's hospitality, retired to their rooms. Some time elapsed before the hoax was generally known, and the doctor never took any steps to discover who was the guilty party.

"You are familiar with Sydney Smith's saying, about the difficulty of making a Scotchman understand a joke. I do not think that it applies to the youth at this northern university. We have a rough sense of humour, which, uncontrolled by the dread of academic penalties, breaks forth into a thousand acts of extravagance. We can boast of a provost and town-council, albeit our town is none of the largest. These civil dignitaries rendered themselves very unpopular among the students, who bided their time to be revenged.

"That time soon came; the town-council dined together in state after their re-election, and, as the students expected, kept up their festivities till a late hour at night. On their return they had to pass through a part of the town which was imperfectly lighted, and here the students had stretched a rope across the street, at about a foot from the ground, and secured it at either side. They then waited in the narrow lanes and alleys till they saw the magistrates approach the fatal rope, when they rushed forth with a yell, which struck terror into

the hearts of their victims, who, losing all sense of dignity and self-control, rushed forward to escape. In their precipitate flight, they failed to perceive the rope, were tripped up and ignominiously landed in the mud, amid the jeers of their merciless adversaries.

"The natural exuberance of youthful spirits must have some outlet, and it finds one here in such practical jokes as I have related. The removal of sign-boards from the houses of the rightful owners, and the placing of them at others where the incongruity cannot fail to excite a smile, is a frequent amusement. Chalmers himself, as you know, was not proof against this kind of practical joking.

"A short time ago the students were amused by finding one morning a sign-board elevated above the college gates, announcing, 'Peats, porter, and other vegetables sold down this close.' It remained there till it was reclaimed by the angry greengrocer from whose shop it had been removed during the night.

"Soon after a sign-board was found one

morning over the door of one of the professors, which had doubtless been removed from the post of some country inn. It announced, 'Refreshment here for men and horses.' The joke was all the more telling, inasmuch as the professor was far from being the most hospitable of men.

"The *charivari* is not confined to Italy; we had a specimen here the other day. A venerable professor, the father of a numerous family of grown-up children, took it into his head in his old age to light the torch of Hymen afresh. If he had led to the altar one bordering on his own age, there would have been less ground for surprise, but he selected a blooming girl, still in her teens, to whom it was said a younger lover had paid his addresses, and not without encouragement. Be that as it may, the marriage was condemned by the students, who expressed their sense of disapproval by hiring all the fiddlers, local and itinerant, they could find, and making them play before his house, during the marriage night, the well-known Scotch air, 'What can a young lassie do wi' an auld man?'

"The foibles of the professors are well known to the students, who do not scruple to profit by them when they have an object to gain. One of them has an insurmountable antipathy to every kind of poultry; and one day, last session, the students being desirous of having a holiday, fell on the ingenious device of shutting up a cock in his desk before he entered the class-room. When he opened the desk 'the vile chanticleer,' as he termed the odious bird, flew out with a crow of triumph, and the professor made his exit at the same time.

"Another has laboured all his life-time under the delusion that he is a wit, and this error has been fostered by the laughter which his jokes have never ceased to excite among the students in the class-room. These jokes are all traditionally known, as well as the occasions on which they are given forth, so that the students are always prepared. A window or two are usually broken, and the breaking of a window elicits the never-failing witticism, 'Ah! there is an instance of vulgar frac-

tions.' He is even said to have bribed a student to break a window, that he might have occasion to indulge in his favourite witticism. Last session his jokes were abruptly brought to a close, from the following lines being found on the black board when he entered—

"'The students laugh, with counterfeited glee,
At —— jokes, for many a joke has he.'

"Another has read the same lectures for twenty years, in which he speaks of 'the groans of the dying and the shrieks of the dead,' without discovering the mistake—an obtuseness which is not shared in by the students, who are always prepared for it. He prides himself, also, on his pathetic powers as a preacher, and never fails to weep at certain passages, bearing in mind, no doubt, the Horatian maxim: 'Si vis me flere.' One of these sermons was lost, and the person who found it was amused by finding written on the margin of the most melting passages, 'Here I greet.'

"These peculiarities, however, are trifling when compared with the eccentricities of another professor, whose high attainments

in a certain abstruse science are accompanied with a lamentable absence of mind, which has often given rise to the most ludicrous scenes.

"He has a habit, when demonstrating any difficult problem, of applying the point of the compasses to one of the eyes of his spectacles, and tapping upon it, as if to evoke the spirit of logic. On a late occasion he happened to forget his spectacles in the class-room, and one of the students mischievously removed the glass so neatly that the trick could not be discovered at a casual glance.

"Next morning the spectacles were put on when the work of the class began. The professor looked uneasy, and examined them once or twice, but being very short-sighted, failed to discover the cause. At length he seized the compasses, and, according to his usual habit, began tapping with one of the ends on the place where the glass should have been. He pricked his eye, and started with pain, but, nothing daunted, tried the other eye with the same result. A child might have discovered the cause, but

this really able and talented man was so much overcome with surprise at this inexplicable phenomenon, that he dismissed the class, and returned home. Next day he appeared with a pair of new spectacles, but avoided all allusion to what had happened the previous day.

"On another occasion, when walking through some fields, he stumbled over a cow. The cow, startled from her recumbent position, gave vent to her feelings by a loud bellow. The professor, being very short-sighted, imagined that he had stumbled over one of the fair sex, and with the politeness of a gallant gentleman, took off his hat, and apologised.

"'I beg your pardon, madam. I did not mean to offend.'

"A fisher-woman, who was passing at the moment, and witnessed the *rencontre*, was heard to remark,

"'Guid preserve us, the man maun be mad to mistak' a coo for a woman!'

"Notwithstanding his absence of mind, he is not deficient in the power of repartee, as the following anecdote will show.

"The Justiciary Court sits here once a year for the trial of prisoners, and is usually presided over by two of the Lords of Session from Edinburgh. On a recent occasion only one of them attended; the other, who had been set apart for that duty, being prevented from attending by illness. The presiding lord possessed many social qualities and a considerable fund of humour, but as he was condemned to dine and spend the evening alone at his hotel, he began to weary of his own society. At length he sent for the landlord, and inquired if there was any learned gentleman in the town who would be willing to share his supper, and give him the pleasure of his society. The landlord at once recommended our professor as a man of profound learning.

"'He is like one of my long-necked, well-corked bottles. Ye will need to draw him well out.'

"The invitation was sent, and the professor made his appearance. His mind was full of the subject which he had been studying in his own quiet room, and all the lawyer's attempts to draw him out were in-

effectual. He ate, and drank, and listened, but spoke not. At length his entertainer's patience was well nigh exhausted, and he began to think that he was wasting his time and his wine on a man whose only genius seemed to be '*un grand talent pour le silence.*'

"After trying him on every subject he could think of, he gave up the attempt in despair, and after both had remained silent for a considerable time, he abruptly and contemptuously asked,

"'Can you tell me what is the charge for a donkey at the Oldmill toll-bar?'

"The doctor eyed him attentively for a moment, as if he did not quite understand the question; then a sudden light sparkled in his eye, as he answered—

"'You need not ask me, my lord. You passed through there to-day yourself.'

"The lawyer laughed heartily at the rebuff which he had himself provoked, and his guest, recovering from his state of

abstraction, entered heartily into the enjoyment of the evening, and astonished and delighted his host by the originality of his views and the depth and variety of his learning.

"The well-known antipathy between Town and Gown, which leads occasionally to serious riots at the English universities, is not unknown here. We poor students are obliged to wear bright scarlet gowns—the appearance of which on the streets is accompanied with cries of 'Buttery Willie Collie!' from all the urchins in the neighbourhood. Who Willie Collie may have been, or in what way his name came to be associated with our college gowns, are questions which may puzzle future antiquarians—I shall not even attempt to solve them. This antipathy shews itself most vigorously during a heavy fall of snow. The snow-balls could not do much harm; but more dangerous missiles are frequently used, and hand-to-hand combats are not unfrequent. The police and the military have occasionally been called in to

quell these riots, and ludicrous scenes have occurred at the police-courts, through the drollery and humour of the lawyer whom the students employed in their defence. Many who are now eminent in the pulpit and at the bar, distinguished themselves in former years as leaders in these snow-ball riots, and doubtless recall their own hot youth, when they find that their representatives at the university have not degenerated.

"There was a serious riot this last session —the only one in which I have ever taken any part. A large pond, about a mile from the college, was frozen over, and hundreds of students and sailors had met to skate and slide. A good deal of chaffing had gone on during the day, but nothing serious happened till the afternoon, when the sailors, tired of the sport, began to break the ice. It was in vain that the students remonstrated; from words they soon came to blows, and a general *mêlée* ensued. The combatants were nearly equally matched in

numbers, strength, and skill; but the sailors being gradually reinforced by others, the students were forced to retreat slowly in the direction of the college. They presented a bold front to the foe, however, and fought their way step by step, till they reached the main street which leads to the college.

"It was fortunate that the combatants were provided only with those weapons which nature furnishes to all—otherwise the list of casualties might have been greater. As it was, there was many a bloody nose and broken head, and it would have fared ill with the students, if they had not reached their own territory in time.

"The cry of 'Sticks!' was soon raised—the students who had hitherto taken no part in the fray rushed from their rooms to the assistance of their comrades, and the battle waxed fierce and hot. Oh! that I had the graphic powers of certain writers of the muscular school

of Christianity, or the fire of that wonderful old heathen, Homer—their prototype—to describe the deeds of daring that were then performed.

"It was in vain that the professors and college servants appeared in their academic robes, and strove to quell the riot—their words of peace were lost amid the din of battle.

"At length, during a sudden lull, the voice of the facetious professor, who is wont to electrify us by his jokes, was heard to exclaim—

"'Look at that wooden paling, Gentlemen, it is college property, and must be preserved. Don't break it down—don't seize the stakes—don't batter the Undergrads' heads with them.'

"The hint was not lost—the paling was broken down, the stakes were seized, and the Undergrads' heads were so effectually battered, that they were glad to beat a retreat, and to leave us masters of the field.

"You must be tired of all this sil-

lege gossip, but, in truth, I have nothing else to write about. Much of it, I think, must be new to you, as you studied at a southern university, and I am not aware that certain of the strange customs prevalent amongst us have ever been described in any book. In truth, the reading public knows more of the German Burschen, or the French "jeunes gens des écoles," than of the magnificent youth who frequent our Scottish universities, and I have only described what struck myself as most singular and droll.

"There are many other things which I wished to describe; but my college curriculum will be finished in the course of a few weeks, when I expect to have the pleasure of seeing you at Holyhead. I wish to consult you about the choice of a profession. I am afraid that there will be very little choice in the matter. I have no money to enable me to study for the bar, or to attend the medical classes; so, like most of our

Scottish youth in the same condition, I suppose I must turn my thoughts to the Church, though I do not feel that I have any special call to the ministry."

CHAPTER VII.

Our story now returns to Marion Leslie. The necessity of sending her to some school where she could be taught the accomplishments becoming the heiress of Inverchewan, and mingle with other young ladies of the same rank in life, was fully admitted by her uncle and aunt; but they found it far more difficult to decide what particular school should have the preference. Mr. Leslie roused himself from his usual state of apathy, and began to read with interest the advertisement sheet of the *Times*, hoping to discover there some school suitable for his niece. He found, however, that the advantages held out there, for the training of young ladies at the different colleges and institutions, were so equal that the one counterbalanced the other, and he remained as much undecided as before.

Neighbouring lairds obligingly furnished

him with the names of the establishments where their own daughters had been educated, and their wives asked Mrs. Leslie exultingly if anything could be more perfect than the fashionable air which their daughters had brought back from Edinburgh and London, or the brilliancy of their execution on the piano, or the purity of their accent. Both of them were too good-natured to wound the parents' feelings by criticising the attainments of their faultless offspring, but they had the good sense to perceive that their niece would be ill at ease at one of these fashionable boarding schools, where her rustic manners and provincial accent would expose her to the ridicule of her companions. So the matter remained undecided till about the time when Ninian went to college, and Marion remained at Inverchewan.

It so happened that about this time a lady, the daughter of a former minister of Islayhead, returned to visit her native place. Accustomed from infancy to the sober refinements and substantial comforts of a Scottish manse, she found herself, on the

death of her father, utterly unprovided for, and, disdaining to be dependent on the charity of others, she applied for and obtained a situation as a governess near London. Soon after this she removed to France, where she obtained the appointment of English teacher in the celebrated "Maison Royale," of St. Denis, an institution under the direction of the Government, for the education of the daughters of officers who have been decorated for their services in the field. She had spent nearly seven years in this institution, and, without renouncing her religion, had gained the respect of the managers and teachers. After a short visit to Islayhead, she intended to return to France.

Mr. Hamilton met this lady, and the idea struck him that the best thing for Marion to do was to go with her to France. In a French school the defects of her early education would be less apparent, and she would, at the same time, be able to receive lessons in her own language from Miss Gammock.

After a few years in this French school, she would return an accomplished young

lady, and any peculiarities resulting from her early training would be ascribed to her foreign education. Mr. and Mrs. Leslie were only too glad to be saved the trouble of using their own judgment, and it was agreed that Marion should accompany Miss Gammock, who had sufficient interest with the managers to procure her admission into the "Maison Royale" of St. Denis.

Marion would have wished much to visit her old friends the Kynochs before leaving her native place, but after the insult offered to the laird by old Adam Mackay, all intercourse with them had ceased, and she knew that any proposal to call upon them would have been displeasing to her uncle and aunt. She was thus obliged to confine herself to writing to her old friend and counsellor Alice, assuring her of her unalterable affection, and promising to write again soon after she reached Paris.

Marion's absence was more felt at Inverchewan than her uncle and aunt would have liked to acknowledge. Both showed this feeling in different ways. Mrs. Leslie looked more sharply after the maids, and

spent more of her time in scolding them. The laird yawned more frequently, put more whisky into his postprandial tumblers of punch, and spent more time in the picture gallery.

Marion wrote once a week to her uncle and aunt, and frequently to Alice Kynoch. These letters have passed through our hands, and form an interesting study, as marking the growth of her mind gradually developing its latent powers through judicious instruction, and the quickening influence of companions of her own sex and age. A few extracts from these letters may give some insight into the internal management of the "Maison Royale;" and though Marion does not describe the *pensionnaires* with the stern and repulsive truthfulness of Charlotte Bronté, in her Villette, it is to be hoped that her experience may not be altogether without interest, especially to those of her own sex who have finished, or who may count on finishing, their education in the French metropolis.

The following extracts are from her letters to Alice Kynoch, and extend over

the four years which she spent in the "Maison Royale":—

"They manage these things differently in France—so I have read in some book which Ninian lent me. I do not know what special things the author alludes to, but in truth everything is differently managed here. Oh! Alice, what *funny* sights I have seen since I left Islayhead. I enjoyed the voyage to London extremely; all the other passengers were sick, but I kept the deck the whole day, and won the heart of Captain C——, the commander of the steamer, who told me confidentially that I was a *trump*. What is a trump, Alice? Something nice, I suppose. Miss Gammock was *so* sick and *so* ill, but I am too much of a sailor to give way to any such weakness.

"I cannot say much about London—we were only two days there, and there was a fog the whole time. Miss Gammock kept her bed, and I was afraid to venture out very much alone. You cannot think what a constant roar there

is, Alice—it is just like the sea after a gale, but louder and more continuous. At least, that was the impression produced on my mind. I was not sorry to leave, as we knew no one. I was anxious to see my new home.

"The passage across the Channel was a little rough, but it did not last long. When the boat reached Boulogne, the custom-house officers came on board—such funny-looking men, with cocked hats, long swords, and mustachios sticking out from their faces, like Tom's, our old cat at Loanhead. And they *did* look so fierce, though most of us were ladies, and not at all formidable in appearance after the voyage. Miss G. spoke to them in French, and we got off more easily than the others, who complained sadly of their dresses being spoilt, by being tumbled about so much. I liked to see the fishermen, with their red, woollen caps, just for all the world like our own Kilmarnocks; and their wives and daughters, with their short, red petticoats, and their neat ankles—they reminded me of

our own fisher lasses at Islayhead.

"Red seems a favourite colour here—the children have red stockings, and the soldiers (such *funny* little men, Alice, I don't wonder that our soldiers beat them!) wide, baggy, red trowsers. And then it is droll to see the people talking—they seem to do it much more with their hands, and shoulders, and faces, than with their tongues.

"I pass over the journey to St. Denis. It was rather late at night when we reached the 'Maison Royale,' and I was allowed to spend the first night with Miss G. I was not sorry for this, as I confess I felt a little nervous on finding myself so far from home, and among strangers, who do not understand me any more than I do them. I was presented next morning to Madame Genève, the head of the establishment, who received me graciously; and after consulting Miss G. about my attainments, decided that I should enter the youngest class. Fancy me, well advanced in my teens, in the same class with girls of ten and twelve. It is for-

tunate that they do not know how ignorant I am; English girls would soon find it out, so I am glad I came here. Miss G. allows me to spend two hours every evening in her room, and drills me in English, so that, while acquiring French, I shall not altogether forget my own tongue. I cannot tell you how kind Miss G. has been to me. If I am ever the mistress of Inverchewan Castle, I shall find a cozy nook for Miss G. at my fireside.

"There are about four hundred girls here, varying from ten to twenty years of age. The first time I was left alone with them on the play-ground, they all came round me, and stared at me as if I had dropped from the clouds, or been a being of a different species. They examined my hair, and my dress, and my hands—not rudely, exactly, but with the simple curiosity of children; and their remarks in broken English were rather amusing—

"'Mais, enfin, she is not so ill—*la sauvage Écossaise.* She has not the hair

red, nor the nose turned up, nor the big bones, like the other Écossaises. *Elle est bien comme il faut. Elle est jolie même.*'

"The examination was satisfactory, and after a time I was left alone by all, save a girl about my own age, who told me that she was the daughter of an Irish officer in the French service, and had spent two years in the 'Maison Royale.' She is a clever, lively girl, and I shall find her a very pleasant companion. We are all known here, not by our names, but by our numbers. Norah is 264, and I am 153.

"Everything here is so different that I sometimes doubt whether I am awake or dreaming. My name has been changed and entered in the catalogue as Marie Annette, a very bad translation, as it seems to me, of the good old Scottish name of Marion. Marie Annette is not a very common name here, and the girls have changed it into Marionnette, which I believe means a puppet or a little old woman, what we in Scotland would call

'a wifikie.' Apart from this liberty with my name, they are otherwise very kind and civil; they have all heard of Mary Stuart and the ancient friendship between France and Scotland, and profess to like me because I am not English. Most of their fathers fell in fighting against the English, so it is only natural that they should have no great liking for that nation.

"The scenery around this is very pleasing, the fields are so green, and the vine-covered cottages so pretty; but oh! Alice, I miss the sea, the glorious old sea, which I used to see every day in Scotland, till I came to look upon it as being almost part of myself. I sometimes waken up at night and think I hear its angry roar, and then I pray for all poor fishermen. I know how unkind the sea often is to them, and what a fearful return it often demands for the riches it has yielded to them.

"I have now been here two months. I delayed writing because I could not arrange my ideas or express myself intelligibly. Everything was so new and strange that I could not have found words to de-

scribe things so entirely different from all that we have been accustomed to see. I shall try to give you some idea of our appearance. We are all dressed in the same way—black dresses, black straw hats, blue cotton stockings in summer I am told, and grey woollen stockings in winter. The slightest departure from this sombre style of dress is at once repressed. A few days after my arrival I was summoned into the dread presence of the governess, and called to account for wearing a white rose which one of the girls had given me. She had another herself, but she had the precaution to conceal it, and thought, no doubt, that I would be equally prudent. I was forgiven as it was my first offence, and I pled ignorance as my excuse.

"You know my hair has a natural inclination to curl, but curls are positively forbidden at the 'Maison Royale' of St. Denis. To curl one's hair, or to wear it in any way but with a simple division in front, would entail a severe punishment; and as Madame G. has very little hair left herself, she is always very severe against

all offenders in this matter. I have had to brush and plaster my hair so in the cold winter mornings to make it lie smooth to my head, that I have sometimes wished that I had no hair at all and could wear a wig.

"We are all divided into classes, and the pupils of the different classes are distinguished by the colour of the band round the waist; at present I wear a blue band with a white border. We obtain promotion every six months, if our conduct has met with the approval of our teachers, and we receive a band of a different colour when we pass into a higher class. Though I know very little, except what old Stirling, the schoolmaster at Loanhead, taught me, I was not placed in the lowest class as Madame Genève at first proposed. I should have felt that very much, as it is made up of the youngest pupils, and I am so very tall. I give you a list of the colours which mark the different classes; it may serve to amuse you: 'Green with a white border, plain green, violet with a white border, plain violet, mixed yellow,

plain yellow, mixed blue, plain blue, mixed gold, plain gold, white mixed with gold, plain white.' And then there is new white and old white, but these colours are worn only by the pupils of the highest classes. I suppose your head is confused with such a mixture of colours; mine was at first, but I have got accustomed to them now.

"The highest class is known as the class of perfection: the pupils have passed through all the inferior classes, and wear a band striped with all the colours which they have previously worn. They are as proud of this band as if it were a field-marshal's baton, or the ribbon of the Legion of Honour.

"Every class is under the direction of two teachers; and you will not form a high opinion of the correctness of our deportment when I mention that one of these ladies keeps an eye upon our conduct, while the other carries on the usual business of the class. You may smile at the idea of girls of sixteen or seventeen being watched like little children, but I can assure you the presence of the '*dame sur-*

veillante' is quite necessary to preserve order in the class; French girls are *so* different from English or Scotch. These two ladies are decorated like officers, and never appear in the class-room without the cross of honour upon their breasts.

"We have not exactly a House of Correction, but we have a *salle de correction* for refractory pupils, which is a very near approach to it. It is under the charge of Mademoiselle Bourrue, a lady of a certain age, who seems to like those best who are oftenest under her care. She is not decorated like the other teachers, nor has she received much education, but she is a great favourite among all the indolent pupils, who prefer her society to the regular work of the class-room. She calls them her '*troupeau noir*,' and shews them a kindness and consideration, which she never extends to those stray visitors whom accident or inadvertency has brought under her dread dominion. The latter are treated with such harshness that they are careful not to make her acquaintance again, while the regular '*mauvais sujets*' are never

"A ludicrous circumstance happened a few days ago. A young girl of fourteen had written to her '*réciproque*' to meet her in the garden after the dismissal of the class. As all such interviews are forbidden, she dressed herself in the cloak and bonnet of one of the *surveillantes* who is very short, and hoped in this way to escape detection. As the surveillante is a little taller, she drew herself up to her full height, and imitated her dignified walk with sufficient correctness, as she thought, to impose upon any of the teachers she might happen to meet. With beating heart she reached the garden; she advanced a few paces, and was beginning to regain her courage, when to her horror she met face to face Madame G., the superior of the institution, a lady whose face never exhibited even the tradition of a smile. To turn back was impossible, to advance without betraying any emotion was her only chance of safety. She advanced accordingly, concealing her face, and respectfully saluted the superior as she passed. The latter returned her salute,

without appearing to suspect her disguise, but, as she expressed it afterwards,—

"'Though I never turned round I felt that Madame's eyes were following me, as much as if my own eyes were in the back of my head. My legs trembled beneath me, and I could hear the beating of my heart, but I hurried on till I reached the tree where my *réciproque* was waiting for me. "Quick!" I said, "hurry back to your place! I have met Madame G.! We are lost!"

"'Did she recognize you?' she asked.

"'I cannot say, but she suspects that something is wrong. Not another word. I am half-dead with fright.'

"'Then, adieu!" Her retreating figure disappeared among the trees—she, at least, was safe. *My* only chance of escape was to reach my room, and to change my dress as speedily as possible. It was too late; when I reached the passage which leads to my room I found Madame G. waiting for me. She overwhelmed me with ironical compliments,

and condemned me to spend three days in the society of Madame Bourrue. *Après tout*, the punishment was not so severe. Madame B. and I are old friends, and she is always glad to see me. I must be more careful next time I meet my *réciproque*.'

"All this may have little interest for you, but I have nothing else to write about. Every scrap of news from Islayhead is delightful. I think of you every day, and dream of old scenes every night, so there is no danger of my becoming Frenchified. I am *so* delighted to hear of Ninian's success at college; I am only afraid that he will take no notice of such an ignorant girl as I am—for I am very ignorant, Alice, and all that I learn here is only a kind of French enamel to conceal my ignorance. It looks well enough outwardly, but it will not bear close inspection or rough handling.

"I am very lonely here, dearest Alice—I feel it most on the Thursdays and Sundays. On those days the pupils are allowed to visit their parents or friends, who come for them and carry them off with the permis-

sion of the Superior. Sometimes I only am left, and though Miss G. is very kind, I sometimes sit down and have a hearty good cry—*that* always relieves me. Norah, the Irish girl, of whom I wrote before, is the kindest-hearted creature in the world; she sometimes remains to keep me company on the Thursdays, and her droll Irish humour and wit never fail to amuse me."

* * * * * *

"I have now been six months here, and feel myself more at home. French is now as familiar to me as my own tongue, which I should almost forget, were it not that Miss G. and I contrive to have a quiet *crack* in her room every evening. I speak the broadest Scotch I can to make her laugh, and, though I speak very good French (at least so they tell me), I am afraid that my English will always be Scotch, or at least have a very strong *soupçon* of it. That will matter less, as I intend to spend all my days in Scotland, where my defects in that way will be a merit rather than otherwise.

"The day before yesterday we had *le con-*

cours, or grand field-day. There is a *concourse* every six months, when the drawings and paintings of the pupils are exposed to the public view, and those who have proved themselves worthy of such an honour are promoted to a higher class. My imagination was duly impressed beforehand by the pictures which the pupils drew of this august ceremony, '*C'est superbe, c'est magnifique!*'—in a word, it was like Naples, there was little in life worth living for after witnessing it.

"At length the day came, and we were all ushered into the *grand salon*, where we found the Marshal Chancellor of the Legion of Honour (I do not know if he holds the same office as our Lord Chancellor, but he wore a wig) seated in the midst of our lady teachers. The oldest pupils were examined by the Marshal, who put to them the most searching questions. It reminded me of the Presbytery examination at the school of Loanhead, only the Marshal looked fiercer than any minister; but that may have been owing to his moustache.

"Then the pupils sang, and exhibited their

powers on the piano. The Marshal is supposed to be an adept in all these female accomplishments, and listened to the performances with the greatest gravity. After this each class marched past the Marshal like soldiers on parade, and I assure you he eyed us very closely, to detect any flaw in our appearance, I suppose; but, on the whole, he expressed himself satisfied. He then distributed the prizes among the most deserving, and delivered with his own hand the bands to the pupils who were entitled to the honour of promotion to a higher class. Think of Marion Leslie, who used to spin at 'the muckle wheel' in the dear old cottage at Loanhead, receiving a band from the Marshal Chancellor of the Legion of Honour. I noticed that the old gentleman's hand trembled a little, and that it had a large scar across the back.

"One or two poor hearts trembled before the Marshal that day, and some eyes wept in secret. One pupil of the highest class was degraded to a lower, on account of her indocility. The Marshal gave her a grey band, which she received with sobs and

tears. The old man said nothing, but he looked somewhat sternly at the Superior, while, with a cold, unfeeling voice, she read out a long list of the offences which had led to this degradation. She will have to wear this band for a considerable time, during which she must walk behind the other pupils of her class, and superintend the cooking. Some of the pupils were refused promotion, and condemned to spend another six months in the same class; indocility or misconduct were the avowed reasons for this refusal; but the pupils thus punished had a different theory.

"Every pupil who receives a new band proves her affection for her *réciproque* by reserving for her the honour of attaching it to her waist. Sometimes they cannot speak to one another for days, and then they express their wishes by cutting out letters on the trees in the garden. It is not unusual to read such inscriptions as these: 'No. 333, reserves her band for No. 222,' 'No. 222 is charmed with the honour reserved for her by No. 333,' or 'No. 234 loves No. 235.' 'No 235 returns the

affection of No. 234,' or 'No. 235's affections are already engaged; in the latter case No. 234 bestows her affections elsewhere."

CHAPTER VIII.

Marion's letters to Alice and her aunt extend over the four years which she spent at Saint Denis. The whole of those four years were spent in France. It was intended at first that she should return to Inverchewan Castle during the holidays, along with Miss Gammock, the English teacher; but circumstances had occurred which prevented that lady from visiting Scotland, and it was impossible for Marion to return alone. Mr. Leslie had occasionally spoken of visiting France and bringing Marion home for the holidays; it is doubtful whether the laird ever seriously entertained the idea; it is certain that he at once gave it up for ever when he found that his wife jumped eagerly at it and proposed to accompany him. The fact of his wife having at once embraced the pro-

posal was in itself a sufficient reason to induce him to remain at home; but there were, doubtless, other reasons which weighed with him. The laird lived before the age of railways and steamers, or, at least, those inventions of modern science were as yet unknown at Islayhead, and he was too prudent a man to risk his life with any of these dangerous innovations, even if they had been known. There is nothing so conservative as ignorance and prejudice, and the laird was content to travel in the same slow, sure way as his fathers had done before him. He had heard of the death of Mr. Huskisson, and regarded it as a judgment upon the nation for departing from the well-beaten path in which their ancestors had been content to tread.

The laird, moreover, was not given to travelling: the longest journey he had ever undertaken was to the Scottish metropolis, on the occasion when, like a second Cæsar, he came, saw, and conquered the lady who now bore his name. His impression of that town, and, indeed, of towns in general, was

not very favourable; while mixing with the crowds in the streets, he was overwhelmed with a sense of his own insignificance. At Inverchewan, and even in Islayhead, he was somebody—the bonnets were respectfully touched, and friendly greetings were exchanged; but when he left those places, where he was so well known, the atmosphere of greatness in which he lived and breathed was gradually dissipated, and he was treated with as little consideration as if he were an ordinary mortal. All this was very galling to the laird's pride and self-respect, and rendered him averse to venturing beyond what he might with some show of reason regard as his own peculiar demesne.

The laird's ideas of geography were somewhat hazy and indistinct. France was to him a sort of *terra incognita*, and he had no great desire to venture forth, like a second Columbus, in search of it. It was inhabited by a race who spoke a barbarous language, ate frogs, and wore wooden shoes, and he preferred the society of those who spoke his own tongue and tabooed

frogs as an article of food. He knew that his neighbour McKillup, of that ilk, had ruined himself by a twelve-months' residence at Paris, and that Mrs. McKillup had returned with a full wardrobe and an empty purse; he took warning by the fate of McKillup, and resolved that Maggie should not be exposed to the same temptation.

A strict regard to historical truth compels the admission that the laird's constitutional and habitual indolence, which rendered him averse to any effort, physical or mental, was one of the many causes which induced him to allow his niece to spend four years in a land of strangers without visiting the place of her birth. He was not deficient in affection for Marion, but his indolence was greater than his affection. After her departure he relapsed into his old habits, and was too much engrossed with the society of the dead Leslies to trouble himself very much about the living ones. He thought that he was not wanting in his duty to her so long as he remitted sufficient money to

cover all her expenses, and allowed her more pocket money than she could spend.

Meanwhile, Marion, as in duty bound, wrote regularly to her uncle and aunt. We have seen these letters, and they are evidently written with far less *épanchement d'esprit* than those addressed to her old friend Alice. They refer chiefly to her studies and to the disposal of her money, and contain none of those minute details which, we trust, impart some interest to the following extracts from her letters to Alice:

"How delightful it is to get a letter from you, Alice! It carries me back at once to the dear old cottage at Loanhead, and makes me the happy girl I once was before this wearisome greatness was thrust upon me. Why was I not left to enjoy my happiness as a simple cottage girl, whose heart was ever ebbing over with joy, and who knew no wish beyond the small circle she loved, and by whom she was loved in return? I long for the home of my infancy and the friends who loved me for my own sake. I long to hear

again the simple, *naïf* words familiar to my childhood. I hate all this greatness, for which I have given up so much, and which has brought me back so little. I sometimes think '*le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle*;' but there is no room for choice now, I must bear my fate as best I may.

"I feel very sad and lonely. I have now been three years here, and if it were not for Miss G. I should almost have forgotten my own tongue, as none of the pupils ever attempt to speak English. My uncle has always been holding out the hope that I should spend the vacation at Inverchewan, but I have ceased to attach much weight to his promises, and I do not expect to see Scotland till I return for good and all, after another year. Then I shall certainly leave *la belle France* with other feelings than those ascribed to our own beautiful queen, Mary Stuart, when she embarked for her ancient kingdom of Scotland, and saw the land of her adoption fading from her view.

"I am all alone here just now. All the

girls have gone home during the vacation; Miss G. and all the other teachers have left, except Madame Claveçin, the teacher of music. As she talks of little else but '*mes quarante ans*,' and is passionately addicted to snuff, you will easily conceive that she is not a very interesting companion; and yet I am compelled to spend two hours every day in practising under her direction. I am passing the time in writing this letter; Madame is so deeply engaged with Victor Hugo's 'Bug Jargal' that she is quite unconscious of the existence of such an important personage as the writer of this letter. Whenever she stops to refresh herself with a pinch of snuff, I touch a few notes of the piano, and Madame nods approvingly,—'*Très bien*, *mademoiselle*, *très bien*, *vous faites du progrès*.' I never saw her shed tears at any real case of distress, but she often weeps copiously over the imaginary woes of the heroes and heroines of romance. But poor old woman! why should I despise her? She is alone in the world, like myself, and perhaps no one ever loved her.

"What a strange adventure I have had since I wrote the preceding lines! Tired of being alone, I obtained leave from Madame Claveçin to have a short run in the garden. To make you understand what happened, I must mention that our garden extends a considerable way from the house, but all in one direction, the house being situated at the western extremity. On the east the garden is bounded by a lofty wall, which effectually prevents us from being seen; part of this wall is lost in the gable-end of a large house, which is used as a military academy under the direction of a German officer. A number of young gentlemen of different nations studying for the army are boarded in this house, but as there are no windows in the end which overlooks our garden, and their playground extends in a different direction, we have never seen any of them. We have sometimes heard them shouting while engaged in play, and certain unmistakeably English cries which I have heard, proved that some of my countrymen were there. Norah O'Connor, my Irish friend,

told me that she had met one of them, a young Scottish nobleman, in society, and that they were both much amused on discovering that they had spent nearly a year as neighbours without ever having seen one another. He seemed to have made a favourable impression upon Norah, who reported him to be handsome and to speak French—'*tout-à-fait comme un Parisien*'—the highest praise, of course, which she could bestow upon him.

"Well, I was—not walking—but having a hearty run in the garden, and the exercise put me into such good spirits that I began singing with all my might, 'Whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad.' Of course, I could not have meant this as a challenge, for I was not aware that any man was within hearing except François, our old Belgian cook, who is too fat ever to leave the kitchen, except on grand fête days, when he comes forth obese and resplendent with jewellery like an Eastern prince. Judge, then, of my surprise when I heard a most decided whistle, and, what was stranger still, the voice whistled a bar of

the very tune I was singing. The air, you know, is a well-known one in Scotland; but I confess it produced a strange effect upon me to hear it whistled in France under such circumstances. I stopped singing, and looked in every direction to discover the mysterious performer. The sound evidently proceeded from the direction of the house at the end of our garden, but whether it was some one in the house or in the adjoining street I could not tell. I was retreating to the house as fast as I could, when I heard the same voice begin to whistle the notes of another well-known Scotch air, 'Bide ye yet.' I could not help stopping to listen, and turning round to see where the sound came from.

"The back of the military school overlooks a road which leads up to one of the gates of the Maison Royale, but this gate is not the principal entrance, and is never used. Some of the windows of the school face this road, but we cannot from our garden see any figures which may appear at these windows.

"I waited till the tune was finished.

From the spot where I stood I could see the upper story of the school, from which the sound seemed to proceed. I was looking in that direction when, to my surprise, I saw first a head and then a pair of shoulders, and then so much of the body of a young man projecting from one of the windows, that I almost screamed with fear lest he should lose his balance and fall to the ground. He turned round in my direction as much as he could, and waved a white handkerchief. I was beginning to have some doubts about his sanity, and these doubts were strengthened on observing him lean back and throw the handkerchief towards our garden. As the wind was blowing in the opposite direction, I scarcely expected that it would reach, but it did pass the wall, and fell at the foot of one of the trees. I hesitated for a moment to decide what I should do; I felt that there would be a certain amount of indelicacy in advancing at once and picking up the handkerchief, and yet my female curiosity was too strong to allow me to leave it unnoticed. Besides, how was I

to know what might be contained in the handkerchief? And if it were picked up by Madame Claveçin or François, or any of the other servants, and found to contain any written message, I might be suspected of carrying on a secret correspondence with one of the other sex—an unpardonable offence in the Maison Royale.

"I retreated as if I were about to enter the house, but I passed the door, and kept close to the wall. I walked stealthily along the wall, so as not to be seen from our own house or the one from which the handkerchief had been thrown. When I stood at length opposite to the tree at the foot of which the handkerchief had fallen, I was glad to observe that it was so near the wall that I could reach it without being seen by the stranger who had thrown it.

"I advanced with beating heart, and had just stooped down to pick it up, when I heard the shrill, unmusical voice of Madame Claveçin exclaim—

"'Que faites vous donc, mademoiselle?'

"The handkerchief was in my hand, and I was sure that she had seen it. If I betrayed the least confusion I was lost. It would have been in vain to protest that I knew nothing of the stranger who had thrown the handkerchief over the wall—I should have been condemned at once as an intriguer, and in all probability expelled from the Maison Royale. Fortunately, however, I am naturally cool and self-possessed, and these qualities have been strengthened by a three years' residence in a French school. So I put the handkerchief into my pocket, and quietly answered—

"'Je ramassais mon mouchoir, madame.'

"I do not think that Madame Claveçin suspected anything, but it was very fortunate that she did not look back as we were returning to the house. I confess that I had the curiosity to do so, and there was the mysterious stranger still at the window, evidently in a very uncomfortable, not to say dangerous, position, and kissing his hand to vacancy — for it

was impossible for me or Madame to see him with our backs turned.

"I returned with Madame to the schoolroom, and seated myself at the piano. It was fortunate that Madame was deep in the mysteries of Victor Hugo's novel; otherwise she would have discovered that I was labouring under some unusual emotion, as every note I played was out of tune.

"After a time I ceased to play, and took out the handkerchief. On unfolding it I found, first, half a dozen sous, which had been placed there, I suppose, by way of ballast. As I could scarcely suppose, however, that the stranger's only object in throwing the handkerchief over the wall was to make me a present of these useful but not very valuable French coins, I continued my researches, and there, to be sure, in the very middle of the last knot, was a piece of paper. It was very much crumpled, but I managed to read it. It was written in English, and I send you an exact copy:—

"'Lord Nairn trusts that Miss Leslie

will excuse him for addressing her in this unceremonious way, as he has no other means of making known to her his sentiments. He has frequently seen her at church, and longed for an opportunity of declaring how much he admires her. He ascertained her name through Miss O'Connor, and is glad to find that she is a *compatriote*. He will contrive to sit in the pew behind her at church next Sunday, and perhaps Miss Leslie will enclose a few lines in the handkerchief, and drop it near him when she kneels down during the service. He hopes that she will not condemn him altogether to despair.'

"Now, Alice, I appeal to you if this was not a very cool proceeding? Here was a young man, whom I had never seen before, inviting me to enter into a secret correspondence with him, and to be guilty of the hypocrisy of dropping him a note when I knelt at prayer.

"I protest, Alice, I felt so hurt and humiliated at the very idea of such an act, that I tore his note into a thousand pieces, and, leaning my head on the

piano, had a hearty cry. I felt much relieved, and had the presence of mind to continue my practising till the time was up, when I went to my own room, and washed away all traces of my tears.

"I was fully resolved to take no notice of the note, and to keep away from that part of the garden where I could be seen from the Military School.

"I am sure your delicacy would have been hurt as much as mine, dear Alice, by such an insult, for I cannot regard it in any other light.

"I heard a good deal about this Lord Nairn, before leaving Scotland. He is the representative of a noble Scottish family, once renowned in the annals of their country, and possessed of extensive estates — but now reduced to comparative poverty and obscurity, through their former attachment to the House of Stuart. I am sorry to say that I have heard sinister reports about him, both here and in Scotland, and his conduct towards me inclines me to believe that there must be some truth in them. Be that as it may, I am

fully resolved to have no intercourse with him of any kind; and if I meet him in society I shall show him by my conduct how much I resent the insult he offered me.

"And yet it is possible, after all, Alice, that he never meant to show me any disrespect. He has been educated in France, and is half a Frenchman by birth. Now, I am sorry to say that nothing is more common than these secret correspondences among boarding-school girls in France. They have all a natural talent for intrigue, and are ready to correspond with anyone who gives them any encouragement. It is for this reason that the oldest amongst them are subjected to a *surveillance* which would be deemed an intolerable tyranny by English girls of the same age—and this, too, with the knowledge and approval of the parents, who are quite aware of the inclinations of their precocious daughters. Young people of opposite sexes are not allowed the same freedom of intercourse here as in England; and French people visiting

England are surprised, not to say shocked, at the comparative freedom of our manners. They are inclined to believe that we are less correct—whereas, in truth, we are only more innocent.

"I am inclined to believe that this young nobleman did not mean to treat me with any disrespect. He has seen me, I have no doubt, at church, and there he must have found out my name from Norah O'Connor. As I have scarcely any friends here he has never had an opportunity of meeting me in society, and the expedient he adopted may have been the only one by which he could express to me his feelings; not that I believe that he is really in love with me, however flattering such an idea might be to my vanity, but, I suppose, being alone and idle, he wanted something *pour se désennuyer*. Of course, I have fully made up my mind to take no notice of him or his proposal. I am not to be tempted by the distant prospect of a coronet into doing anything which I feel to be wrong, so my Lord Nairn may direct his attentions elsewhere. I confess, however, that I am

at a loss to know what to do with his handkerchief. Am I to keep it, or to watch for some opportunity to throw it over the wall when nobody sees me? I really cannot decide.

* * * *

"I have received your letter, dearest Alice. The greatest pleasure in life is to get a letter from you: how I dwell on every line, and conjure up every scene which you describe. How I long for the wings of a dove, or some other swift-winged bird, that I might skim my way through space, and perch on the window of the dear old cottage at Loanhead, and peep in on Alice, though it were only for half a minute. I would return contented to my French cell, and listen, without a murmur, to the ceaseless chattering of the demoiselles by whom I am surrounded.

"I am glad that you approve of my conduct in the matter of the young lord. He foolishly threw away three other pocket-handkerchiefs in the same way as the first, and I was obliged to pick them up for fear of getting into trouble. They all enclosed

notes written in more urgent terms than the first, but, of course, I took no notice of them. I was in hopes that his patience would be at length exhausted, and that he would leave me alone, but I am led to believe, from the following incidents, that he has not quite given up the idea of making some impression on my obdurate heart.

"The vacation came to a close about a month ago, and, as the garden is open to all the pupils, he had the good sense to abstain from dropping his handkerchiefs over the wall. The great event of this quarter is the Fête Dieu, and we have all been preparing for it from the day when the Maison Royale opened. As a Protestant, I do not feel the same interest in it as the others, and I do not intend to take any part in the procession; but, through sympathy, I have learned to believe it a very great event indeed. You are not to imagine that the pupils look upon it in a purely religious light, though it has been the occasion of eliciting more prayers, I believe, than any other event of

their lives. 'Prayers for what?' you may ask. Why, Alice, for fine weather, that they may have an opportunity of displaying their dresses to advantage and exciting the admiration of others. A French girl's feelings of enjoyment depend altogether upon the effect which she produces upon others; it is for this reason that she is always most miserable when alone.

"But to return to the Fête Dieu: it has been the one subject of thought and conversation ever since we met. It is now over; and, as you have nothing of the kind in Scotland, and it is celebrated here with great pomp and splendour, I shall try to give you some idea of it. I can describe it the more truthfully, as I do not share in the feelings of enthusiasm to which it has given birth among the other pupils who have taken part in it. I believe that any of them, on reading my description, would pronounce it a very tame and lifeless affair—far short of the reality. I should not perhaps attempt to describe it at all, if it were not for the adventure which befell me on that occasion.

"Much anxiety was felt about the weather, and many an ardent prayer was offered up on that subject. If it happens to be foul weather the Fête Dieu is a very poor affair, and general disappointment is felt. There is no opportunity of displaying the fine dresses or the handsome figures; a temporary altar is erected at one of the angles of the Maison, near a statue of the Virgin Mary, and the procession marches through the cloisters, with no other spectators than a few of the friends of the pupils who have been admitted by special favour. This happened once since I came here; it reminded me of players performing without an audience.

"On this occasion the prayers of the young devotees were heard; the day was one of the finest I have ever seen even in France. A magnificent altar, all covered with flowers, was erected at the end of the noble avenue which leads to the Maison Royale, and all the balconies of the cathedral which face the avenue, were crowded with ladies and gentlemen. It was really a splendid sight, and, Protestant as I am,

I could not help being impressed by it, more so than I should like to confess. I can understand the feeling which induces many young English ladies of undecided religious principles to turn Roman Catholics when they remain long in Italy and France.

"Well, the procession advanced in the following order: I shall be as minute as Mr. Alison when he is describing one of his great battles—perhaps more truthful. Madame Deuxtemps, the teacher of dancing, was the commander-in-chief; she had to rally her forces and to marshal them so as to produce the most favourable impression on the spectators. She was quite in her element, and strutted about with such airs of antiquated grace that she reminded me of Jane Carr, the daft wife of Islayhead, who marches about with a tin crown and a wooden sceptre, and believes herself the rightful heir to the British crown.

"The pupils who do not take any active part in the representation are drawn up in two long lines, along with the teachers, who carry enormous bouquets. At the

head of the procession, between these two lines, marches one of the pupils of the highest class, carrying the banner of the Virgin.

"She is accompanied by other pupils of the same class, who hold the cords of the banner; the whole of them are covered with a large veil of white muslin. Behind them is the sacrist, carrying the cross; on either side of him is a pupil of the class next to the highest, carrying a torch. They are also covered with a large white veil, thrown over their naked heads, and above this they wear a crown of honeysuckle.

"These are followed by a band of forty little girls—the youngest in the establishment. They are drawn up four by four. They all wear veils, surmounted by a coronet of flowers, and each one carries a basket full of rose-leaves, which they strew before the feet of the priest who carries the holy sacrament.

"These little girls are followed by four of the senior pupils, who are crowned with wild flowers, and carry censers in

their hands. Next to them are four pupils of the junior class, who occupy what is admitted by all to be the place of honour in the procession. They are known as the Virgins, and their election causes as much excitement as the choosing of the Queen of the May in England. I need scarcely say that here, as elsewhere, beauty carries the day: the Virgins are always the prettiest girls in the Maison Royale.

"They are all crowned with white roses and jasmine, and as our Virgins this year were really very pretty, they were very much admired. I am happy to say, for the honour of Irish beauty, that Norah O'Connor was one of the Virgins, and it says much for her kindly feeling that she would allow no one but me, heretic though I be, to arrange the coronet of flowers on her head.

"Then came the canopy, which was carried by eight pupils of one of the higher classes; they were accompanied by eight other pupils of the same class, each of whom held a cord of the canopy. It

is somewhat singular that the canopy is called a *dais*, and every ploughman in Scotland, Alice, knows what a *dais* means, as well as a *bink* (banc.) It is wonderful how many French words are to be found in our broad dialect, which, you see, I have not yet forgotten.

"The bearers of the canopy are followed by four pupils holding wax tapers in their hands. On either side of them are the singers; they are dressed the same as the others, with the exception that they have no coronets.

"When the singers have reached the altar they conceal themselves behind it, so as not to be seen, and chaunt, 'O Salutaris Hostia!'

"I think I mentioned in a former letter that we are not allowed to have any flowers except on the occasion of the *Fête Dieu*. For some unknown reason we are not allowed to carry or to wear the smallest *bouquet*, and this prohibition, as might be expected, has made us all passionately fond of flowers. I send you a daisy, which Norah gave me when I

was arranging her coronet, and I hope you will send me, when you write, a leaf of rosemary from the little garden at Loanhead.

"Well, but you may ask what has all this lengthened description of a Popish procession to do with your strange adventure in the garden? Much, as you will see. Being a Protestant, I took no part in the procession, but the deep interest I felt in my class-fellows induced me to be present as a spectator. I took my place beside Miss Gammock, beneath the shade of a large elm-tree, at a part of the avenue from which we could see the whole line of the procession.

"There was a large crowd of spectators, composed chiefly of the parents and friends of the pupils, and when they recognized any one in the procession they pressed forward, so as to be as near to them as possible when they passed. I suppose it was in this way that I suddenly found myself separated from Miss Gammock, and surrounded by strangers. I felt rather uneasy, for my own expe-

rience of French manners has led me to the conclusion that the politeness for which we give them credit exists only in our own imaginations, and that there is no country where an unprotected female is more exposed to insult than in France. A crowd of roughs, in England, will respect the person of a lady, though they may not be able to keep their fingers from her pockets; but I have seen well-dressed gentlemen in Paris push a lady off the pavement into the gutter, and then turn round and laugh at her mishap.

"I looked everywhere for Miss Gammock, and was beginning to think of trying to make my way out of the crowd, when a voice from behind addressed me in English, with a slightly foreign accent.

"'Miss Leslie is separated from her friend, and feels uneasy in consequence. I hope she will lay aside her fears, as I am here to watch over and protect her.'

"I turned quickly round to see who had addressed me, and though I had

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"'Miss Leslie is separated from her friend, and feels uneasy in consequence. I hope she will lay aside her fears, as I am here to watch over and protect her.'

"I turned quickly round to see who had addressed me, and though I had

only seen him once before, I had no difficulty in recognizing the young gentleman whose person I had seen half projecting from the window of the Military School, and who had been so prodigal in the disposal of his pocket-handkerchiefs. As a man is not seen to the best advantage when you have only a horizontal view of his head and shoulders, I confess I had some pardonable curiosity to examine my eccentric admirer, so I turned round and looked him full in the face.

"He is not a bad-looking young man, Alice, as the world goes. When I saw him first, his face was very red, but that, I suppose, was caused by the violent exertion of thrusting his broad shoulders (he *has* broad shoulders) through a narrow window, as his complexion now is much the same as that of other people. He is very tall (I like tall men), and without being decidedly handsome, has that distinguished air which we poor plebeians regard as the hereditary possession of men of high rank and noble ancestry. He

is an officer in the army, and though he was dressed in plain clothes, you could at once discover his profession; there is something so easy and *dégagé* in the dress and bearing of an officer, that he betrays himself wherever he goes. His head is large, but I cannot say that the expression of his face is very intellectual; in truth, the only expression it wore was one of undisguised admiration of myself, which speedily brought the blushes to my cheeks. He observed my confusion, and said—

"Do not be alarmed, Miss Leslie. Your safety is dear to me as my own life, and if my presence annoys you I will at once retire. Excuse me for addressing you in this abrupt manner; but I shall not have another opportunity of seeing you. My period of leave is expired, and I must now join my regiment, which is stationed at Windsor. I leave St. Denis in a few days, probably never to return. If you refuse to listen to me now, we may never meet again.'

"What could I do, Alice? I could not

run away; the crowd was so great that I could not leave the spot where I stood. His manner was perfectly respectful, and I could not avoid listening. He stooped and concealed his head behind my bonnet, so that no one could see that he was speaking to me.'

"'Miss Leslie will pardon me for addressing her without the ceremony of a formal introduction. I have long admired her at a distance, and my feelings of admiration at length overcame my sense of propriety, and induced me to express them in the only way in my power.'

"'You must have a low estimate of my sense of female delicacy and propriety, if you thought that I would enter into a secret correspondence with a stranger.'

"'Not a stranger, Miss Leslie, not altogether a stranger. It is said that those who are born in the bleak north cleave to one another in foreign lands, and feel that being born in the same land binds them together by a closer tie than the natives of other countries. I feel this to be true from my own experience. When I learned from

Miss O'Connor that there was a young Scottish lady in the Maison Royale, my interest was at once excited, and when I learned further that she was amiable, beautiful, and accomplished—a stranger in a land of strangers—I longed to make her acquaintance. I hate society; but I laid aside my usual habits and went wherever there was a chance of meeting you. You have lived the life of a recluse, and I never *could* meet you. The only place where I could see you was at church, and there you were so intensely devout that I never could attract your attention.'

"'And does Lord Nairn think it right to make the house of prayer a place of assignation?'

"'I have been educated in France, and look upon these things in a different light from what you do in Scotland. My father is nominally a Protestant, but really nothing at all; my mother, who is now dead, was a Frenchwoman, and a sincere Catholic. It was agreed in their marriage contract that I should be educated as a Protestant; my father thought that he educated me as a

Protestant when he taught me nothing at all, except to laugh at the mummeries of Popery—as, I have no doubt, Miss Leslie is now doing.'

"'Miss Leslie respects all religious sentiments when they are sincere. She pities the man who has no religious convictions.'

"'I *am* to be pitied; but I mention this, not to excite your pity, but to obtain your forgiveness. Pardon me, for I have never known or been taught anything better. When I stand beside you, I breathe such an atmosphere of purity and goodness, that I long to be like you—something different from what I now am. It has been my misfortune through life never to have enjoyed the society of those of your sex whom I most esteem and admire; my mother died when I was quite a child, and my father has left me to the care of strangers. You are the first of your sex whom I have ever truly loved, and I feel that, with such a woman as you for my companion and guide in life, I should be a different man.'

"'Really, my lord,' I replied, 'you must have much discrimination of character to

discover all these virtues in me, when we have now met for the first time, and scarcely exchanged half a dozen sentences. I am not simple enough to believe all these protestations of affection and esteem, and it is scarcely honourable for a nobleman like you to speak as you have done to me, a friendless girl in a foreign land, of whose position in life or connections you know nothing.'

"'Pardon me, Miss Leslie. Though I am personally a stranger to you, I know all about your family and your past history. My father is the proprietor of an ancient castle and some acres of moorland in your native county, and I spent some of the vacations there when I was at Eton. I was very fond of boating, as all Etonians are, and frequently visited Islayhead for the purpose of gratifying my taste for that amusement. I know Loanhead (ah! you start at that old familiar word), and I once spent a night at sea on board Stormy Jack's boat, during the herring season. I made the acquaintance of your uncle, Mr. Leslie, and had the honour of being invited to dinner

at Inverchewan Castle. If you doubt my word, I may further mention that I displayed much interest in the family genealogy; that the laird invited me to smoke my cigar after dinner in the portrait gallery, where he introduced me to the Leslies of past generations—truculent-looking fellows, with fierce moustachios, and coats of mail, whose names and exploits I have forgotten.'

"I confess, Alice, when he mentioned all these old places and names, I felt a warming of the heart towards him, which those only can feel who, friendless and in a foreign land, unexpectedly meet one who has gazed on the scenes which are familiar to themselves from infancy, and known those whom they have been taught to love from the first dawn of reason. If this young nobleman had wished to excite an interest in himself personally, he could not have chosen a better subject to talk about than dear old Loanhead, your father, and my uncle; but I had sufficient control over my feelings to conceal the impression which his words had produced, and answered coldly—

"'It appears to me, my lord, that you do not make a very generous return for my uncle's hospitality by ridiculing one of his harmless foibles. My uncle, with all his foibles, is very dear to me, and it hurts my feelings to hear him spoken of with disrespect.'

"'A thousand pardons—I did not mean to treat your uncle with disrespect. He was very kind to me at an age when we never forget a kindness, and I should be ungrateful, indeed, if I ever spoke or thought of him otherwise than with feelings of respect and gratitude. We all have our little weaknesses, and learn to bear with one another. My father has the same weakness as your uncle, and bores me whenever I see him (which is seldom) with the exploits of my ancestors and the value of the family portrait gallery. If I had my will, I would soon bring the old fellows to the hammer, as I once saw a young prodigal do on the stage. We have enough to do to think of ourselves in this world, without troubling our heads about those who have gone before us. I think as little of my ancestors

as they thought of me, and that was little enough in all conscience. If I had my choice, Miss Leslie, I had rather have your portrait than those of all the Menteiths (I am the head of the Menteiths, you know), who were out in the '45, and shed their blood for the *grand monarque*, who rewarded them with more titles than lands. I would gladly dispense with some half-dozen of the titles which they have bequeathed me, for a larger rent-roll.'

"He said all this with an air of pleasantry, and I have no doubt but he meant to atone, by the lightness with which he spoke of his own ancestors, for his unfortunate allusion to the portrait gallery at Inverchewan Castle. We Leslies, you know, are only of yesterday, *sans père ni mère* as the French say, and he, no doubt, meant to conciliate my good opinion by showing how little store he set by the Menteiths of past generations. I confess, however, that his words produced an opposite effect: they led me to question his sincerity. The Menteiths have always had the character of being fair and false, and I began to suspect

that this young nobleman had inherited the propensities of his race. I at length said :

"'I must return to the house, or my absence will be noticed. I should feel obliged if you could discover my companion, who, I have no doubt, has been searching for me all this time in the crowd.'

"'One moment, Miss Leslie, before we part. May I ask when you return to Scotland?'

"'I shall return in the course of a few months. I shall then have completed my four years' residence at the Maison Royale.'

"'Excuse me if I ask another question. Will you be staying at Inverchewan Castle on your return?'

"'I shall be staying with my uncle and aunt, and they have not left the Castle for many years.'

"'Then we shall soon meet again. I shall obtain leave of absence in about six months to visit my father's property in your native county. When I come north I shall

lose no time in calling at the Castle to pay my respects to my old friend, Mr. Leslie.'

"At that moment I discovered Miss Gammock at some distance in the crowd. I could easily see by her face that she was in great distress, and some unknown power seemed to rivet her to the spot where she stood. She looked appealingly to those around her, and I thought she said something to an extremely stout old Frenchman, who only shrugged his shoulders without paying any attention to her or to what she said. I pointed her out to Lord Nairn, and asked him to do me the favour of going to her assistance. He readily promised to do so, but begged as a parting favour that I would allow him to shake hands with me.

"'You need not turn round,' he said; 'that might attract attention, and of course it would be altogether *contre les règles* for a young lady of the Maison Royale to be seen shaking hands with a young gentleman who was neither her brother nor her cousin. A French girl would faint at the very idea, but Miss

Leslie has not laid aside the manners of dear old Scotland so far as to refuse me this last favour.'

"Well, Alice, I did not see any great harm in that. It pleased him, you know, and it did not hurt me; so, without changing my position, I slipped my right hand round behind my back. The *Fête Dieu* is one of those rare occasions when the senior pupils are allowed to wear kid-gloves, and I had treated myself to a pair, which were a world too large for me. You know I have the smallest of hands, though I have often handled an oar and done the roughest of work before they took me to the Castle. Well, the glove on my right hand, which is the largest of the two, was rather loose, and before I could do anything to prevent him Lord Nairn had slipped it off, and began covering my hand with kisses. At least I suppose it was kisses, for I could see nothing, but I felt something warm pressed repeatedly against my hand before I could withdraw it. I was very angry, and turned round to scold him for his presumption; but he was gone. He was already standing

by the side of Miss Gammock, and, to my surprise, without any provocation, he gave such a push to the fat Frenchman who stood by her side, that he nearly overturned him Before the stout Frenchman, who said *such dreadful words*, had recovered his balance, Lord Nairn had carried off Miss Gammock, and placed her by my side. He politely raised his hat and bowed. I have seen nothing of him since, at the window or elsewhere, so I suppose he has left St. Denis.

"Poor Miss Gammock was crying. As she is not much given to the melting mood, I was surprised to see her in this state, but supposed that it had been caused by anxiety at our separation. I asked her what was the matter, and could scarcely keep from laughing when she told me the cause. On being separated from me, she was carried backward and forward for some time on the living sea, till she got jammed into the thickest part of the crowd, where a Frenchman of elephantine proportions placed his foot upon her toes. It was in vain that she appealed

to his politeness, his generosity, his manhood, all her appeals were in vain, he stood there with the solidarity of a rock; such was his *vis inertiæ*, as Madame G. would call it, that he could not, or would not move, from the spot. She was almost fainting when Lord North came to her assistance, and treated the Frenchman in the unceremonious way I have mentioned. Poor Miss Gammock! whenever I see her I think of the fat Frenchman.

"Now, Alice, I must bring this letter to a close. The time of my residence here will soon be over, but, oh! how I long to breathe 'the caller air' at Loanhead, to taste the old Findon haddocks, to caress your father's rough, kind hand, and to see my own Alice's gentle, kind face. And Ninian, I shall be almost afraid to speak to Ninian — he will be so learned now, and know so much besides when we went hand-in-hand to Mr. Stirling's school.

"I shall see so much more of you when I return. You know I am no longer an ignorant country girl—I am now a young lady, and I can visit wherever I

choose without being controlled by any one. I wish I could take Father Time by the forelock and persuade the old man to hurry on his steps a little faster, till he brings me to the point when I shall leave La Maison Royale, with all its absurd restrictions and semi-military discipline, and return to the land of my birth, every foot of which is dearer to me than ever."

CHAPTER IX.

THERE are always sad associations connected with the breaking up of a class at college. The young man must be callous and cynical beyond his age, who can bid adieu, without some feeling of sorrow and regret, to the comrades whom he has daily met and the benches on which he has daily sat for a period of four years. The tie which binds the English student to his university is not dissolved when he takes his degree; he is still a member of his college, and on certain solemn occasions can appear and exercise his vested rights. A process of assimilation has commenced of late years between the northern and southern universities; the graduates of the former are now recognized as members of the academic body, but at the period when Ninian took his degree there

was no closer tie to bind the graduate to his university than that sentimental attachment which all feel, more or less, to the place where they have spent the most interesting period of their youth.

Scotchmen, since the middle ages, have been a race of adventurers: the *res angusta domi* has driven them forth from their own grassy dales and heath-clad mountains to search for wealth and distinction in more favoured lands. If the history of foreign wars can tell of Scotchmen who have been first in the field of danger, and wisest in council, the annals of learning can also tell of others of the same race who have raised themselves to distinction in foreign universities and reflected honour on the land of their birth.

The Scottish youth of our universities have still something of the bold venturous spirit of their fathers; one-half of those who finish their studies may be content to settle down as ministers, doctors, schoolmasters, or lawyers, and to live on the modest reward of their professional labours in their native land; but the others, under the pres-

sure of ambition or of poverty, turn their faces to the south, or to the east, and with nothing else to trust in but their own brave hearts, and the blessing of God, resolve that they shall never turn their faces to the north till they can return, if not with distinction, at least without shame.

Ah! if our more favoured brethren of the south, who are only too ready to indulge in the passing jeer at Scottish pride and Scottish poverty, knew what some of these youths have had to endure in the search even for bread, when, like the Spartan boy, they have wrapped their tattered cloaks more closely round them to conceal the wolfish hunger gnawing within, and have envied Lazarus the crumbs which he ate without thanks at the rich man's door in many a fashionable square in the capital of this Christian land—if they knew of their long, and purposeless, and despairing walks by day and by night along its streets, when they have sought, in the excitement of physical exertion, to forget their own hopeless condition, and the bright dreams of their early youth — if

they knew of the drudgery, the unrequited toil and the crushing contempt of the vulgar rich — in a word, if they knew of all they have had to bear before their names have become known in the world, they would not envy them the distinction which they have gained, or reproach them with that poverty in which partly lay the secret of their success. A Scottish law-student, himself the representative of a numerous class, who could live and support the dignity of his position on forty pounds a year, deserved to be Lord Chancellor of England!

It tells much in favour of the dutiful affection which the graduates of our Scottish universities cherish towards their *Almæ Matres*, that the endowments intended for the benefit of poor, but meritorious students, are not the relics of mediæval piety or generosity, as in the south, but the expression of the gratitude of former students, who, having passed themselves through the rough and rugged path of poverty, have tried to smooth the way to those who succeeded them in after years. May the same

spirit animate their successors, and may those who profit by their bounty learn to go and do so likewise.

Ninian Kynoch's course at college was now finished, and he left it richer in intellectual and material wealth than when he entered it. At the close of the session he competed for, and was fortunate enough to obtain, the Greek prize of 60*l.*; and after paying all the expenses of the session, he had still this sum intact. He had never had so much money in his life before; and, apart from the honour of the prize, he valued the money as the means of enabling him to enter upon the study of one of the liberal professions.

The magistrands, or students of the fourth year who are about to graduate, may easily be distinguished in the college court, or hall, by their tattered red gowns. It is a sacred duty amongst them to tear one another's gowns to shreds; and as college rules require that no student shall appear in the class-room or the public school without his gown, under the penalty of a severe fine, a very

difficult question arises as to what constitutes a gown. A magistrand's idea of a gown, during the last week of the session, is about a foot of red cloth crossing his shoulders; and while the professors may be inclined to think that this is curtailing a gown beyond the limits of academic propriety, they have the good sense to keep their opinions to themselves on such occasions, and to grant a little license to the youths who are about to leave them.

And now the prizes have been decided, and the venerable principal has placed the Master of Art's cap on the heads of all the graduates. There was a time when the Masters of Art wore a gown and hood on such occasions; but at present they are content to borrow the gowns of the clergymen of different denominations who are good-natured enough to lend them — and it is not unusual to see the Episcopalian arrayed in the puritanical proprieties of the Geneva gown, and the Presbyterian prelatical so far as to wear the robes of the English churchman.

The work of the session is over—the class-rooms are closed, and the lobby has met for the last time. The class supper has been discussed, and sundry tumblers of toddy after it—speeches full of kindly and patriotic feeling have been delivered—songs, some of them so replete with genial and catholic humour as to make them favourites wherever they are heard, have been sung—"Auld lang syne" has been chaunted hand in hand—the landlord's bill is paid, and—the world is all before them!

Ninian returned at once to Loanhead. He had not yet decided on the choice of a profession, and was anxious to consult Mr. Hamilton.

He felt the need, also, of some relaxation after the labour of the session. He was no longer a healthy, ruddy young sailor—the midnight oil had attenuated his frame, and taken the colour from his cheeks. He required the sea breeze, and the society of Loanhead, to restore him to his former vigour. Perhaps he thought more of one who was

soon expected there—of one who had never been absent from his thoughts during those four weary years of absence — of one who had been the inspirer of all his hopes, and the guiding star of his existence—of Marion Leslie, who had finished her course at the Maison Royale of St. Denis, and was now expected, along with Miss Gammock, at Inverchewan Castle.

The reader may easily conceive what effect four years' residence in France, and daily intercourse with young French women of her own age, had produced on Marion Leslie. She was a beautiful girl at seventeen, a rustic beauty, the pride of Stormy Jack's cottage—she was now a beautiful young lady, slightly French in dress, manners, idiom, and accent—just enough so to make her *piquante* beside those of her own rank and age who had been educated at home. Any traces of her early training which might still remain discernible in manners or speech were attributed to her foreign education; and it was admitted by all who knew

her that Miss Leslie of Inverchewan was a very charming person. There was little left, however, of that Marion Leslie who had spun at "the muckle wheel," and enlivened Stormy Jack's cottage with her bursts of song — four years had wrought great changes in her as in others.

The change in Ninian was equally great, though not so easily perceptible. The change was more internal than external—more subjective than objective. In manners, and dress, and outward appearance he had gained but little: a Scottish university is the last place to which Lord Chesterfield would have sent his son to complete his education. Our Scottish Chesterfields seem to be of the same opinion, and send their sons to the southern universities to obtain those polished and easy manners which they would despair of their ever acquiring among the less cultivated students of the north.

Ninian was as simple in his manners as when he first entered the university.

His natural sense of propriety would have prevented him from doing anything *outré* in good society, and his delicacy of feeling led him to respect the feelings of others: in all essentials he was a gentleman, but still he was as ignorant of the customs and the language of good society as if he had still been a sailor on board the "Arctic." No one could have conversed with him in a railway carriage or on the top of a coach without perceiving that he was a man of education, and no one could have believed, from a cursory glance, that he was a gentleman, or had been accustomed to the society of gentlemen. His whole education had reference to the training of the intellect alone, and any attempt to cultivate those graces which shed their refining influence over the intercourse of society, would have called forth the scorn and ridicule of his fellow-students, who neither possessed nor cared for the elegancies of life, and worshipped intellectual greatness as the only real good.

In this respect our Scottish students are much to be pitied. If they are ignorant clowns when they enter college, they are learned clowns when they leave it They carry home with them, after four years' study, the same rustic manners, and the same provincial dialect, which they brought with them. If they obtain situations as tutors in gentlemen's families, they gradually exchange their original boorishness for the polish of civilized life; but if, as often happens, they become first schoolmasters and then parish ministers, they carry with them to the grave their vulgar speech and plebeian manners. It is for this reason that many families of position, while they have a sincere respect for the national church, are averse to asking its ministers to their houses, lest, through their ignorance and vulgarity, they should bring contempt on their sacred profession, and render themselves ridiculous in the eyes of their other guests.

If one of these men happens to be gifted with a stentorian voice, or "a guid brain,"

(braying?), as the people call it, no matter how gross his ignorance or boorish his manners, his success in the Church is certain; while another, his superior in intellect, in learning, and every scholarly accomplishment, but gifted with a less powerful voice, must turn his face to the south, if he looks for preferment, or be content, if he remains in the north, to bear the *sobriquet* of a "stickit minister."

The practical abolition of patronage in the Church, through allowing the people to choose their own minister, is gradually changing the whole character of our Scottish clergy. They are deteriorating in manners and learning; they know that they can only recommend themselves to the people by assimilating themselves to the people, and cultivating what the people most cherish in the pulpit—flashy eloquence and vulgar declamation. The race of learned ministers who shed distinction on the kirk towards the close of the last century is extinct. At the present day they would be characterized as dumb dogs, and such men as Robertson would have to hide their

diminished heads before the Mucklewraths and the Macbellews whom the Scottish nation delights to honour.

Ninian's original intention had been to study for the Church, but he was anxious to consult Mr. Hamilton before taking such a serious step. It would have been difficult for him to analyze the motives which led him to entertain such a wish, but he *had* a secret wish to see Marion Leslie before entering on the study of any profession.

All that he had hitherto done had been done for her sake; if he could only see her he might be able to judge whether he had laboured in vain, or whether any hope of success yet remained. The Church held out the readiest means of obtaining a modest competency. Nature had endowed him with a powerful voice, which had been strengthened by contending with the Arctic gales, and he had no doubt but he could soon roar himself into a parish—but would he then be nearer his goal? Would Marion Leslie be pleased with the modest position of a minister's wife? Would the heiress of Inverchewan be content to share with

him the homely comforts of a moorland manse? He had his doubts, as well he might.

Marion had returned to Inverchewan Castle a few weeks before he left college for Loanhead. Her majority was approaching, and there were great preparations, both at the Castle, and among the tenantry, to celebrate that event. Oxen were to be roasted, whisky was to flow in rivulets, casks of old ale were to be broached, bonfires were to be lighted on every neighbouring hill, and the tenantry on the estates were to meet and dine together in honour of the young heiress.

Marion was no longer a simple country girl, unnoticed and unknown; she had appeared at one or two of the county balls, and while her own sex tore her to pieces, and could find nothing to admire in her, the gentlemen were unanimous in declaring that Miss Leslie was the *belle* of the county, and all, from the youngest to the oldest, professed themselves her ardent admirers.

A few days after her return to Inverchewan Castle, Marion visited Stormy

Jack's cottage at Loanhead. It happened to be the hour of the family dinner, and she found all her friends there except Ninian, who had not yet returned from college. Marion could not revisit the cottage where she had spent the early years of her life without some natural emotion: she embraced Stormy Jack, Mrs. Kynoch, and Alice with as much warmth of affection as if she were still one of the family, who had returned home after four years of absence.

The joy of these good people at seeing again one whom they had never ceased to love, was so great that they forgot for the moment that Marion belonged to a different class in society, and used towards her all those terms of endearment which would have fallen naturally from their lips if she had still been one of themselves.

When Marion seated herself in the low wooden chair which had been appropriated to her in former days, they soon saw that she was no longer the same Marion who had once been the light of their home. It was not merely that she was changed in

figure and features, though four years had wrought a great change in that respect, transforming the slim, rustic beauty into a handsome and elegant young woman, with all the ease and assurance which good society imparts, or that the wrapper which she had formerly worn had been exchanged for a robe which did honour to the Parisian *modiste* who had produced it; there was something in her manners, her language, and her *tout ensemble*, which made them feel that a great gulf of social distinction intervened between them.

This was painfully felt by both parties, after the excitement of the first few minutes was over. Marion thought that her three old friends had changed—that they were plain, common-place sort of people, rude in speech and manners; whereas they were, in truth, what they had ever been, and the only change had taken place in herself. She had too much good sense and kindness of heart to show the disappointment which she felt, but Mrs. Kynoch, who was in the habit of expressing her feelings on every subject,

did not consider herself called upon to maintain the same reserve.

"Eh, sirs, but ye are a grand lady and a bonny. It winna do for puir folk like us to ca' ye Marion, as we ance did. We maun ca' ye Miss Leslie noo."

"Hoot awa, guid wife," said honest John; "ye are bringing the blush to her cheeks wi' yer idle clavers. Ye may ca' her ony name ye like, but she'll never get ony name but Marion frae me. I am owre auld noo to learn guid manners, and Miss Leslie sounds sae cauld-like."

"Call me what you have ever called me," said Marion, "however changed I may be to others, I hope I shall always be the same to you—a dutiful and affectionate daughter, anxious to repay the great kindness which you showed to the friendless orphan."

"Na, na," said Mrs. Kynoch; "we'll hear naething o' repayment. John there wad hae naething frae the laird, and nearly thrappled that lawyer body for offering him siller."

Marion blushed with shame and sorrow

that her words had been so misunderstood, but before she could speak Alice came to her rescue.

"You misunderstood Marion, mother. She did not speak of repaying us with money; she only meant that she has not forgotten that she was once treated by you like a daughter, and would like to show a daughter's affection in return."

"Aweel! aweel!" said Mrs. Kynoch, only half convinced; "Miss Leslie winna be angry at an auld wife like me, wha bare her aboot in thae arms when she was a bairn. Guidness be thankit we need naething frae naebody. Ninian is doin' for himself, honest lad (Miss Leslie is no speerin' for him), and it is a puir hen that canna scrape for ae chicken."

John Kynoch felt that there was something wrong in his wife's remarks, without exactly knowing what. He shared all her feelings of independence on the subject of money, but he could not believe that Marion would have hinted at such a thing at their first meeting. Still she had spoken of repaying their kindness, and in John's

limited range of ideas repayment could only be made in the current coin of the realm. He felt that if anything was wrong it was better to leave it to Alice, who could understand Marion better than himself or his wife.

"I am thinking, guid wife, thae twa young folks wad like to hae a bit crack by themsells about auld times, so come ye oot wi me, and we'll get the nets sorted for the evening's fishing."

John and his wife went out, and Marion and Alice were left alone. They looked at one another for a time without speaking, as if they doubted whether they were or could be the same to one another as they had been four years before.

Alice had been to Marion what an elder sister is to a younger—her counsellor as well as her friend, but she now felt that their position was changed, and that Marion, in knowledge and experience, was superior to herself. No feeling of envy rose in her gentle heart, but, as she surveyed the elegant and fascinating creature before her, and thought of Ninian's chance

of success, she could not avoid sighing.

"Why do you sigh, Alice? Are you sorry to see me back, or do you find me so much altered, that you sigh for the Marion of former days?"

"You are altered indeed, Marion. I do not think I should have known you, if it had not been for your old *pawky* smile. You must not be angry at my mother; she loves you as much as ever, but she misunderstood your words. How beautiful you are, Marion! You are like one of the angels in my father's big bible."

"You must not flatter me, Alice, as others do. I find you changed also, more spiritual in expression, with more of the stamp of heaven upon your face. I think you will yet recover."

"No, Marion; my days are numbered, but I am very, very happy to see you once more. You are different from us now, you are a grand lady. I wish Ninian were here, he would know how to speak to you. He has become a great scholar, and carried off the first prizes at college. We expect him home every day."

"I always thought him very clever. Is he much changed in appearance?"

"You would scarcely know him. He looks like a student, and speaks as you do. We all feel that he is no longer one of us. I wish he were here. He never writes without asking about you. Ah! Marion, it is you who have made him a great scholar."

Marion blushed slightly, and changed the subject; and Alice, though anxious to befriend her brother, was prevented, by delicacy of feeling, from alluding to him again, further than to remark that he intended to study for the Church."

"In that case, my uncle's influence will be useful to him. He is the patron of several parishes, and I shall ask him to give Ninian the first which falls vacant."

Alice, with the natural tact of a woman, felt that these words, kind though they were, augured little in favour of Ninian's chance of success with the young heiress. If Marion had entertained the most distant idea of sharing Ninian's home, she would never have offered to interest herself so

readily in his behalf. There was nothing in her manner, which was perfectly cool and self-possessed, to indicate a warmer feeling than kindness towards one who had been the companion of her youth.

Alice could easily perceive that, if Marion had ever felt anything more than friendship towards her brother, the feeling had not been strong enough to survive four years of absence; and while she loved and admired her brother, she was not so sanguine as to believe that he could awaken any tender feeling of interest in the heart of the elegant creature who was seated by her side. She trembled as she thought of the misery he must endure when he saw the one bright dream of his existence dispelled for ever, and the prize, for which he had toiled so manfully, in the possession of another.

Before taking leave, Marion explained to Alice that she would not be able to visit the cottage for some weeks, as she was about to accompany her uncle and aunt to Edinburgh, to be presented to her mother's relations, and to assist in selecting furniture

more suitable for the principal rooms of the Castle than the antiquated articles which had remained unchanged since the days of Mr. Leslie's grandfather.

She then handed over to Alice the presents which she had brought with her from Paris for her old friends at the cottage; they were all in exquisite taste, and even Mrs. Kynoch, who was naturally something of a stoic, could not help holding up her hands and exclaiming—

"Eh, sirs, but they are bonny!"

Marion took an affectionate farewell of her friends, and, stepping into the carriage, which had been waiting in the narrow street, she gave her directions to the coachman with as much ease of manner as if she had been "to the manner born." The report had spread through Loanhead that Marion Leslie was the grand lady who had driven up the street in the carriage to the Kynochs' door, and many a dirty *mutch*, or cap, might have been seen at the different windows, and equally dirty faces beneath them, striving to get a peep at her as she passed along. Some were glad to see the

sweet young face which smiled upon them. The feelings of others were expressed by the pithy exclamation of one old beldame who stood at her door with her arms akimbo :

"Set her up wi' her carriage and her flunkeys! I have seen the day when she was content, like mysel', to ride on Shank's naigie."

Marion had left for Edinburgh before Ninian returned to Loanhead. He felt much disappointment at not having seen her, and would have at once followed her to Edinburgh, if Alice had not dissuaded him from doing so. It was a painful task to prepare him for the fate which she now believed to be inevitable, but she deemed it better that he should be prepared for it in some measure beforehand, than that it should burst upon him at once in all its stern reality. She had not forgotten the effect which Marion's sudden elevation to rank and fortune had formerly produced upon him, and though she had no reason to dread the same result now, she was anxious to prepare him for the bitter disappointment

which she was almost sure awaited him.

"Tell me all about her, Alice. She must be much changed in four years, but do you think that she loves us as before? I mean, do you think that she has not been spoiled by her good fortune?"

"No, Ninian, I do not think that she has been spoiled, but she looks as if she had been born a grand lady. You could scarcely believe that she had ever been one of ourselves, that she had eaten at the same table, spoken the same language, and slept beneath the same roof. She is grateful for all our kindness and loves us still, but we can never be the same to one another as before. She has lived among a different class, and acquired all their ideas and manners. It is not perhaps that she knows so very much. I believe that you are far more learned than she is, though she has been in foreign lands; yet even you, Ninian, with all your learning, would feel that she belonged to a superior class."

"You know my secret, Alice. It was your idea that I have followed out in striving, by study, to make myself worthy

of her. If I have been successful, I owe all that success to her. If she is superior to me in manners and address, that is only another reason why I should love her more?"

"Yes, Ninian, that may be. But it is not another reason why she should love *you* more. You do not know the workings of a young girl's heart; such secrets are not learned at colleges. Learning is much admired and respected by ladies of a certain age, but is rather dreaded by those who are younger. I never heard of any young lady falling in love with a man for his learning—there are other accomplishments, of a far lighter character, which have usually more weight with them.

"I know, I know," said Ninian impatiently, "we do not sacrifice much to the graces at college, and I should doubtless appear rough of speech and boorish in manners beside her; but surely, Alice, she has not forgotten how much I loved her before she left. If I could only see her and show her my prizes, I would lay them all at her feet, and tell her they were all

her own, that it was for her sake, and to prove myself worthy of her, that I had toiled and laboured and hoped against hope till the hour of her return. She cannot be that Marion whom I covered with my coat in the boat, and watched over through the cold, dark night, if she could hear the story of my life's devotion, and learn that she herself was the object of my heart's idolatry, without being moved. Pity, they say, is akin to love. She could not but pity me, and she might come in time to love me."

"Ninian, my own brother, I would not willingly cause you a moment's pain, but women are quicker in reading one another's hearts than men. Marion does not love you. I know it by the way in which she spoke of you. I need not repeat her words, they were very kind, but she would never have spoken them if she had loved you. Her heart is still her own, and she is not so unfeeling as not to be touched by the simple story of your love, but when you have seen her you will feel yourself that she cannot be your wife."

"Why not?" said Ninian, almost roughly. "Is it because there is better blood in her veins than in mine? Her grandfather was a grazier, and mine was a fisherman; the same blood flows in the veins of both."

"True, Ninian," said Alice, quietly. "But do you think that if you waited on the laird of Inverchewan and told him that you expected him to give you his niece for a wife because his father was a grazier and yours a fisherman, the laird would listen favourably to your suit on that account? Or do you think that such an argument would have much weight with Marion herself? She has lived among a class who have taught her to look upon ancient birth as something to be prized as much as wealth, and it would not recommend you to her favour to remind her that she is not better born than a fisherman's son."

"What am I to do then, Alice? Am I to give up the fondly-cherished hopes of a life-time without an effort at success? Am I to break down the idol which is enshrined within my heart, and to say, 'Ye have taken from me my gods, and what have I left?'

Is it you, Alice, who inspired me with the idea of winning her love, who now tell me to renounce all hope? Better for me to have been sleeping beneath the Arctic snows, or fathoms deep in the ocean, than to live deprived of all that can make life dear to me!"

"Be a man, Ninian. Speak and think like a Christian. Your language savours of spiritual idolatry. If she is the idol of your worship, it is right that that idol should be taken from you. Your language is not that of a brave man, my brother. When I counselled you to try to make yourself worthy to be her husband, I acted for the best. I knew that it was your only chance. Do you think, if you had remained a poor ignorant sailor, that you would have been in a better position than now? Then, you would have had no chance; you would have shrunk from her presence and been afraid to speak to her—whereas now, if you cannot win her affection, you can at least command her respect."

"Oh! Alice, I have loved her so much and so long, it seems so hard to give her

up! It would be like giving up the better part of myself; all that is good in me has sprung from her. The thought of her has preserved me pure amid strong temptation, has kept me awake at my books when others were asleep, has sustained me amid all the trials and privations of a poor student's life. And now, when I thought that I had caught sight of land, it does seem hard to discover that it is only a delusion, and that I am now drifting on the ocean of life without an aim or object."

"Do not say so, Ninian. God will bring good out of this trial, as He does out of all our trials. You know the story of the man who, on his death-bed, told his sons that there was a treasure concealed in his garden. The sons dug up every inch of the garden, and though they failed to discover the treasure, their labours were rewarded by an abundant harvest. You have been digging in search of a treasure; you may not find that treasure, but your labours will not have been in vain. You have already reaped a rich intellectual harvest, and laid up stores of learning

which will be useful to you as a minister of the Gospel."

"Oh! Alice, I have only wished to be a minister that I might marry Marion. I think that was a wrong motive. I have striven against that thought and tried to repress it, but I have never been able to convince my mind that I was doing right. If I enter the Church at all, I trust it will be from a higher and purer motive; I must consult Mr. Hamilton before I decide. Meanwhile, I must see Marion, and alone. I shall make one last appeal, and if I fail, I shall leave Scotland for ever."

"She will return from Edinburgh in a few weeks, to be present at the rejoicings on the occasion of her coming of age. You will receive an invitation to be present, and it will be better for you not to present yourself before her without being invited. While at the Castle, you may find an opportunity of seeing her alone—the only opportunity you may ever have. Profit by it; tell her in the simple earnest language which your own heart will dictate all that you have achieved for her

sake. If your story fails to move her, bear your misfortune like a man. There are other things in life worth living for besides being happy."

CHAPTER X.

Will the reader accompany us from the bleak, cold eastern county in Scotland, which has hitherto been the principal scene of the events related in this work, to the town of Windsor? It is a bright sunny day towards the end of May—winter has relaxed its icy grasp before the softening influence of spring—the fine old elms in the Long Walk are clothed with foliage, and the noble old castle—the only residence worthy of royalty we have in England—is towering over the whole like a rock rising in the midst of an ocean of green.

The infantry barracks are occupied by a Highland regiment which has recently returned from foreign service. Two battalions of the Guards have been ordered abroad, and the other five battalions are required in London and Dublin. Hence

the honour has been awarded to the Highlanders to protect the person of the sovereign, whose presence at the Castle may be learned from the flag floating on the central tower.

The air is so fresh and pure that the officers have erected a tent in the centre of the barrack-square, where they spend the greater part of the day. It is about noon, and a party of them are lounging and smoking and chatting about the events of the day. Windsor is delightful quarters at any season of the year, and officers and men are always glad to leave the stifling heat or the drizzling fogs of London for this residence of royalty, which combines all the advantages of town and country.

It might have been observed, from the unusually grave tone in which the officers conversed, that the subject under discussion was one of some importance. Three of them were men in the prime of life, whose stalwart frames and rugged features betokened their northern origin; their faces still retained traces of their exposure to the rays of a warmer sun than visits the

clouded regions of the north. The fourth was a youth of little more than twenty, who half reclined on one of the benches, and divided his attention between his cigar and the conversation of his comrades. Philip Mowbray had only recently joined, and, though an Englishman, had already won the hearts of all his Scotch comrades, by protesting, on every occasion, that the kilt was the most decent and becoming garment which the ingenuity of man had ever invented to display the symmetry of the human form; and that the martial strains of the bagpipe were sweeter to his ear than any other kind of music. Philip's enormous wealth and unbounded liberality had also contributed something to his popularity among men who had little but their pay to live on. He was a good-natured, kind-hearted fellow, who really liked and felt as proud of his regiment as if he had worn the tartan from his infancy, and felt himself perfectly at home among the sons of the Gael. Another element of his popularity was that he was more Scottish than the Scotch themselves; and

would sometimes exclaim, with tears in his eyes, at a certain hour after mess, that the great misfortune of his life was that he had not been born in Scotland or, at least, had a Mac for his mother!

Philip lay smoking his cigar with a lazy, listless air, as if it required his undivided attention. The colonel and the other two officers sat at some little distance and spoke, at first, in a subdued tone, but their voices became gradually louder and more earnest.

"I tell you, Menteith," said the colonel, "it is no use trying to save him now. He is a disgrace to the regiment, and a disgrace to his country. It is natural for you to take his part, as you bear the same name and belong to the same clan, but if you had been in my place, you would have brought him to a court-martial and had him cashiered long ago."

"He is very young, Colonel Hay. If he were dismissed from the army, his family would be disgraced, and he himself ruined for life. He is an only son, and has been spoiled in every way. Would it not be

better to try to get him to sell out, and thus avoid the scandal of a court-martial? Is not that your opinion, Major Murray?"

"Why, I am not so sure," said the major, with a grim smile; "if he had been a Murray I should no doubt have thought so, but, as he happens to be a Menteith, I am disposed to take an impartial view of the subject. You must concede, Menteith, that the chief of your clan is an unmitigated blackguard."

"Then he is the first of his name," said Menteith, hotly, "to whom that name can be applied, and I do not take it kindly of you, Major Murray, to apply such a name to him in my hearing."

"Come, come, Menteith, we are too old friends to quarrel about such a worthless fellow. I have heard you call him harder names than I have done just now, and you know I have always stood by him, for your sake. If it had not been for me you would have shot him, for showing the white feather and disgracing your name on the field of battle."

"Yes, curse the coward; I would have shot him with my own hand if it had not been for you, old boy. The mention of his name always puts me in a fury. Think of the bearer of a noble name—the representative of a warlike clan—turning his back on the foe and retreating, like a craven-hearted coward as he is. I wish to heaven the old Highland sergeant, who seized him by the throat and dragged him back to the front of his company, had throttled him on the spot or sent his bayonet through his miserable body. I, for one, should have returned a verdict of justifiable homicide."

"Well, there is no use talking of what is past," said the colonel; "his conduct has been as bad ever since—has been as disgraceful in peace as in war. He is a coward, a liar, and a cheat. Wait, Menteith, till I have finished. I have said nothing which I am not prepared to prove at the proper moment. If we do not take notice of his conduct, the officers of other regiments will keep aloof from us; it strikes me that the cavalry here are beginning to show us the cold shoulder already,

and all on his account. I am told that he has lost money to several of them on the race-course, and at the gambling-table, and failed to pay it. I am told, also, that the reason why none of them went to Lady Ascott's ball was because they declined to meet him or us. A pretty state of things! I tell you, Menteith, we must get quit of this namesake of yours, and then we shall have a few words of explanation with the cavalry."

"But how are you to get quit of him?" said Menteith; "he will not leave the regiment. We have tried again and again to get quit of him by gentle means. If he is to be tried by court-martial there must be some specific charge against him, and I question if anything can be proved to justify us in dismissing him."

"Why, Menteith, it would be difficult to find a single white spot in such a black sheep. The difficulty will be, not in proving anything against him, but in choosing what to prove. I know enough against him to get twenty men cashiered; he is a

true Ishmaelite—his hand is against every one, he spares neither friend nor foe. Our friend Mowbray there has been one of his victims; there is no reason why I should conceal the circumstance, though Philip has had the good feeling not to talk about it. You will be able to judge, when you have heard it, whether there is enough known against him to get him cashiered. Mowbray, and I, and Nairn took a run up to London about a fortnight ago; we dined together at our club, and after dinner Nairn asked us if we would like to visit one of the hells or gambling-houses which are still to be found in the neighbourhood of St. James's. I declined at first, but to please Philip, who was anxious to see one of those places, I laid aside my scruples, and agreed to accompany Nairn, who assured us that he had the *entrée* of the house. He took us to a house which had every appearance of being closed for the night, as no light was to be seen, or sound heard. He used the knocker in a way known only to the initiated; after a short interval

we could hear the whispering of voices, and the door was partially opened.

"Nairn spoke one or two words, which satisfied those within, and we were admitted without further parley. We were conducted to an upper room, the door of which was secured by several bolts; at a given signal it was opened, and we found ourselves in the midst of a party of ten or twelve gentlemen, some of whom were playing at *rouge et noir*, and others looking on.. He called for champagne; and after watching the game for some time, Mowbray began to play. He had the usual run of good luck which attends beginners; roll after roll of notes was handed over to him by the croupier, which he carelessly crammed into a pocket outside his coat. After a time, satisfied with his success, he left off playing, and Nairn took his place at the table.

"I have often heard the latter boasting of his knowledge of the game, and the large sums he has gained in this country and on the continent; on this occasion his usual good luck did not

attend him. He lost again and again, till his purse was emptied, when he ceased to play. Philip was seated upon one chair, with his legs extended upon another, quietly smoking his cigar; the pocket of his coat, in which he had placed the money, was hanging over the back of the chair. It was so well filled that I could see one of the rolls of notes sticking out; as there were several suspicious characters in the room, I kept a watchful eye on all that was passing.

When Naim left off playing, he went to the sideboard and partook of some refreshments; he then walked up and down the room, stopping occasionally at the table to watch the game. I noticed that he passed twice close to Philip, and dropped his handkerchief and stooped to pick it up. I did not suspect anything at first, though it struck me that he took a long time to pick it up, but I thought nothing of this, as he had drunk a good deal of champagne. He continued for some minutes walking up and down the room, and then took possession of a vacant place

at the gaming-table, and resumed playing. At that moment my eye happened to fall on Philip's pocket, and I perceived that the roll of notes, part of which had been sticking out, was gone. As I was certain that Philip had not changed his position, my suspicions were excited, and the idea flashed across my mind that Nairn had taken the money when he stooped to pick up his handkerchief, I resolved to watch him closely.

"His play was attended with the same ill luck as before, and I observed that he paid his losses with notes, whereas he had previously paid them with gold. In the course of half-an-hour he lost a considerable sum, and, after muttering certain imprecations against his bad luck, he rose from the table. I continued to watch him. He went to the sideboard, uncorked a bottle of champagne, and drank it off without stopping. He then began to pace up and down the room for about ten minutes, when he again dropped his handkerchief behind Philip's back. I was stand-

ing in the same position as before, when Nairn turned his back to me and stooped down. When he rose he had his handkerchief in his hand, but I observed that the tail of Philip's coat was not in the same place as before. Nairn must have touched it when he stooped. My suspicions were strongly excited, but still they did not amount to certainty; no notes were sticking out of Philip's pocket before Nairn stooped, and I could not judge by its bulk whether any had been taken from it. The tail of the coat had certainly been touched, but that might have been by accident.

"Nairn resumed his play with the same success as before, and in about the same period of time was cleared out. I observed that he paid his losses in notes; but still he might have had a supply of notes as well as of gold when he began to play. Knowing his usual habits, I was only surprised that he had any money at all, as I knew that he had been borrowing to pay a troublesome creditor, a few days before we left Windsor.

"He again refreshed himself at the sideboard, and began walking up and down the room. The cigar had dropped from Philip's lips, his head had sunk upon his breast, the heat of the room and the excitement had been too much for him—he was asleep. Again Nairn dropped his handkerchief and stooped to pick it up; my suspicions now amounted almost to certainty, and I rushed forward to catch him in the very act. Before I had reached him Philip had sprung to his feet, and, confronting Nairn, whose hand was still in his pocket, said,—

"'Why, hang it, man, you must leave me enough to take me back to Windsor!'

"Nairn muttered some hurried words about his hand having got entangled in his coat, and at once left the room. We soon followed him. We walked on for some time in silence, neither of us was willing to speak. At length Philip said:

"'Murray, you must give me your solemn promise that you will never mention to any one what has happened this evening.'

"'On one condition,' I said. 'Speak to Nairn yourself; tell him that I saw all that passed, and that, to prevent scandal, I am willing to overlook it, provided that he send in his papers at once to the colonel, and prepare to leave the regiment. If he refuse to do this, I shall bring his conduct under the notice of his brother officers, and demand his expulsion from the regiment. I am not sure but I ought to communicate with the police.'

"'No, no,' said Philip, hastily; 'I would not have it known for the world that I had been gambling in that horrible place, with such a fellow as Nairn. It was my first visit to a hell, and it shall be my last. We must keep the matter secret, and try to get Nairn to leave quietly.' Hillo, Philip, come here and tell us about the interview with Nairn!"

Philip rose slowly from the bench on which he had been reclining while this conversation was going on, threw away the end of his cigar, and, after indulging in one or two lengthened yawns, joined the speakers.

"What is up now, Murray? I thought I heard you call me. You were talking of our friend Nairn, were you not?"

"I was telling of the way he eased you of your money, Philip."

"The less we talk of that the better. You know it was agreed that the matter should be kept secret."

"Yes, on one condition—that Nairn should leave the regiment. As he is still here, the promise is no longer binding."

"Have you had any conversation with him on the subject, Mowbray?" the colonel asked. "I ought to have known of all this before."

"Yes. I saw him in his own quarters the day after we returned from London. He is the coolest customer I ever came across. When I entered his room, he said, 'Ah! Mowbray, I am glad to see you. I was just going to call upon you to ask what was the meaning of the expression you used last night, about leaving you enough to take you back to Windsor.' I was so much taken aback by his coolness, that I felt as awkward as if I myself had been the

culprit, and Nairn the injured party. I scarcely knew what to say; but I stammered out something about Major Murray being able to explain. I had not the heart to tell the fellow that he was a thief. It was not that I was afraid of Murdoch Viscount Nairn, I know him to be at best but a '*poule mouillée;*' but I felt sorry for him, and the loss of the money was nothing to me. At the mention of Murray's name he changed colour, and said :—'We must settle it between ourselves, Mowbray. Murray has always been my enemy; it is a case of *vendetta* —we belong to two clans which have always been hostile to one another. I could pardon much to you, Philip, which I could never forgive to Murray. I suppose you have come to apologize for the expressions you used. Well, I observed that the champagne had an unusual effect upon you, and I am willing to ascribe it to that and the excitement of the play. We shall never allude to the subject again. Sit down and have a cigar.' 'I declined his offer and pleaded another engagement. Since that time he has treated me as if nothing unpleasant had

ever happened between us, and, in fact,' said Philip, with a smile, 'if Major Murray had not been present I should have thought myself in error, and Nairn innocent of the charge of easing me of the money.'"

"If Nairn were tried by court-martial on this charge, would you be prepared to give evidence against him, Mowbray?"

"Most distinctly not, colonel. I know nothing of how much money I had in my pocket, and I cannot swear that any money was taken from it. My success was so rapid that I crammed the notes into my pocket without counting them. I felt Nairn three times touch my coat; but it was as much in jest as in earnest that I said, 'You must leave me enough to take me back to Windsor!'"

"Could you swear, Major Murray, that you saw Lord Nairn take money from Mr. Mowbray's pocket?"

"I could not swear it," said Murray, after a pause; "but my suspicions amount almost to certainty."

"Your suspicions will go for nothing before a court-martial," said Menteith,

warmly. "Nairn may have his faults, but I cannot believe him guilty of an act which would degrade him to the rank of the lowest criminals. If he is to be tried by court-martial, or dismissed from the army, it must be on some other charge than that of stealing money in a gambling-house."

"I knew nothing of this before," said the colonel; "but there are other charges which can be easily proved. God knows," he continued, with some emotion, "I have no wish to injure the lad. He is a countryman, and his family is distantly connected with mine. He has never given me any personal cause of offence, but he has created such scandal, and brought such disgrace on the regiment, that his conduct can no longer be overlooked. If he would only get leave of absence, and go away for a time, till we have changed our quarters, and these ugly stories are forgotten, all might yet be well. Menteith, you are his friend and clansman, could you not get him out of the way for a time?"

"Leave it to Mowbray and me," said Menteith; "we may be able to devise something."

Colonel Hay and Major Murray rose and left the tent. Menteith continued the conversation with Mowbray.

"These two men, Mowbray, have never liked the lad, but I have no reason to think that you have any unkindly feeling to him. We must try to do something with him. Have you seen him to-day?"

"I have not seen him to-day," said Philip, dryly, "but I have heard him."

"How do you mean?"

"As I passed his room about an hour ago, I heard him praying."

"Praying!" said Menteith, with a puzzled air; "I did not think that he was much in that line."

"Nor I. But he was praying, and, what is more than can be said of many people who pray, I have no doubt that he was sincere."

"Indeed!" said Menteith, still more mystified; "and what was he praying for?"

"That the windows of heaven might be opened, and a second deluge poured down upon the earth."

"Why, he must be mad."

"Not exactly. At least, there is method in his madness. In sober truth, the ship-wrecked mariner, or the traveller in the desert, never longed for rain more ardently than Nairn does at this moment."

"It would take a good deal to wash him clean. Is that what he means?"

"No, no, he believes himself pure as any neophyte. If he felt the need of any such moral ablutions, I should begin to have hopes of him. The truth is, that Nairn's horse is to run in three days against one belonging to Captain Heavysides of the cavalry. If he lose he will not be able to meet his engagements, as he has staked very heavy sums in favour of his own horse, and in that case I need not tell you what will be the result. Heavysides will show him no mercy. Nairn's horse is not so fast as Heavysides', but has more strength and powers of endurance. The race-course is near Staines, and is usually wet and swampy. Nairn knew this, and no doubt thought of it when he made the bet. Unfortunately, however, for him, there has not

been a drop of rain since he made the bet—the race-course is in the best condition for a light horse, and Nairn knows that, unless there be a fall of rain, he has not the shadow of a chance. Judge, then, if his prayers for a second deluge be sincere."

"But was he really praying?" said Menteith, with a puzzled air.

"Why, I do not say that he was on his knees, or that his desires were expressed in the most orthodox language, but he was talking to himself as I passed his door, and I heard him declare that unless a certain personage, whom I suppose he regards somewhat in the light of a patron saint, sent an abundant supply of rain, he might as well blow his miserable brains out at once."

"No danger of that, Mowbray. Men like Nairn are never guilty of such deeds. If his horse lose, he will be obliged to leave the regiment, and that is some consolation."

"It is my belief," said Mowbray, "that he will never leave the regiment unless he is compelled to do so. Why, if he left

the regiment, what would he be good for? It would not do for a viscount to be a marker at a billiard-table, and he is scarcely fit for anything else. He is not a good enough shot to be a gamekeeper, or he might be provided for in that way."

"Is there nothing you can suggest, Philip, to get him out of the way? You have saved him from grief before, can you do nothing for him now?"

"Why, to tell you the truth, Menteith, things are coming to a crisis. The colonel means mischief. Nairn is in his power, and if he brings him to a court-martial, he has not a leg to stand upon. I believe that Nairn knows this, but he is desperate and reckless. We must get him out of the way for a while, till this has blown over."

"I have often thought that if he were married he might become a different man."

"I doubt that very much; but, still, marriage is his only chance. A bright idea has struck me. You know Nairn was over in France this winter, perfecting himself in the French language, and many other things besides. Well,

for a week or two after his return, he was constantly raving about some Scotch heiress whom he had met in a convent, or some such place, at St. Denis. He seemed really to have been struck with her, and he told me that he intended to renew his acquaintance with her when she returned to Scotland, which she expected to do soon after he left. He spoke of her as being very beautiful, and, what is of still more consequence, she is the heiress of a large estate—no small consideration with an acreless lord."

"That is a bright idea of yours, Philip. Could we not persuade him now to leave at once in search of this heiress? You know her name, I suppose?"

"Miss Leslie of Inverchewan. I remember the name from having once visited that part of the country when on a yachting trip to Iceland, and met with some kindness from her uncle—a good old boy, but a dreadful bore about the antiquity of the Leslie family.

That, however, is a common weakness among Scotchmen."

"I am too serious to mind anything you say in that way just now, Philip. Could we not drop a hint at mess to-day that Miss Leslie was about to be married, or that an uncle had died abroad, and left her an enormous fortune, entirely at her own disposal?"

"That might have some effect, but I question if anything would induce Nairn to leave this till his match with Heavysides' horse is over. After that event, he will only be too glad to leave — perhaps he will levant, and we may hear nothing more of him. Assuredly that would be a consummation devoutly to be wished for."

"In our case I am afraid the wish is father to the thought. Nairn is the last man in the world to think of levanting; so long as he can prey upon his friends, he will never dream of throwing himself upon the charity of strangers. But here he comes, to answer for himself."

Murdoch Viscount Nairn sauntered

slowly into the tent, and threw himself languidly on one of the benches. The messman, who, like most of his class, looked like a Wesleyan preacher in reduced circumstances, walked up to him, and asked him if he would partake of any breakfast. His lordship muttered something which sounded very much like a curse, and ordered him to bring a supply of soda-water and brandy. The messman speedily returned with a long glass — the sparkling fluid, duly diluted with brandy, was slowly raised by Nairn to his lips, and quaffed with evident satisfaction.

As he was rarely in an amiable humour at any time, and was always savage with everyone after a hard night's debauch, Murray and Mowbray walked out of the tent, and left him to his own meditations, which, to judge from his expression, were not of a very pleasant character.

The effects of dissipation and constant excitement were already beginning to tell on his appearance, though he had

scarcely passed from youth to manhood. He was tall and firmly knit, easy and *dégagé* in his bearing, and with features that would have been handsome, had it not been for their sinister expression. His face was a sort of compromise between his French and Scottish origin: his mother had given him her dark, snaky eyes and olive complexion, while he was indebted to his father for his high cheek bones and his hair, which none but his sire would have pronounced to be auburn.

And yet that languid, dissipated, broken-down young man — who lies reclining on that bench, slowly puffing at a cigar, as if he felt even that to be too much exertion — is the inheritor of a noble name—the descendant of a race whose fame in arms history will not willingly let die. Of all their past greatness he inherited only the name—their virtues seemed to have passed away with the lands which they once possessed, and their representative, with all his barbarous titles, was a solemn

satire on the evanescence of all human greatness.

The name of Menteith is well-known in the annals of Scotland and France, and those who are curious in these matters may find a list of all the titles which they bear in either country by consulting any approved work on the peerage. The star of the house of Menteith was clouded in darkness when the roar of Cumberland's artillery was heard on Drumossie moor: the members of the family had sought and found employment in the armies of France, and shared in that welcome which the French king generously extended to all the followers of the Pretender. The head of the family had risen to high rank in the French service, and, after the lapse of more than a century, they were restored, by act of Parliament, to all the honours which their forefathers had possessed before their fatal attachment to the House of Stuart. Pity, also, that they could not be restored to all the broad acres and well-wooded forests which had

once belonged to the house of Menteith; but these had passed into other hands, and could never be regained.

There must have been something radically wrong in the training of this young lord, of whom it might be said with truth that he inherited all the vices of the two races to whom he owed his origin. He was cunning, avaricious, and grasping, addicted to gambling and every other vice; these evil propensities had ripened with his years, till he was avoided by those of his own rank, and compelled to associate with the vilest of the vile. Whatever may be the faults of the Scotch and the French, their worst enemies must admit that they are not deficient in courage, but this miserable youth had proved himself a coward and a poltroon, and thus brought disgrace on the noble regiment to which he belonged.

As he had nothing to live on but his pay, which hardly supplied him with cigars and gloves, he was obliged to have recourse to the gambling table and the

race-course for the means of gratifying his expensive tastes and habits. The frequenters of those places are not usually very scrupulous in their principles or practice, but the blackest leg amongst them soon learned to avoid Nairn as one who never paid when he lost and always exacted payment when he won. He was obliged, therefore, to prey on such unwary strangers as accident or his own ingenuity brought within his reach, and he used to boast that the only advantage he had derived from his noble title was that it enabled him to throw his victims off their guard. Every Englishman is a worshipper of rank and title, and Nairn knew how to profit by his knowledge of this fact.

The reader will already have recognized him as the young officer of the military school at St. Denis, who wrote the letters to Marion Leslie, and introduced himself to her on the occasion of the Fête Dieu. He had visited France, not so much for the purpose of perfecting himself in his

profession, for which, in truth, he cared very little, as to be out of the way till the scandal of a disgraceful act of swindling, in which a foreign prince had been the victim, was in some measure forgotten.

While at St. Denis, he had met Miss O'Connor at the house of a mutual friend, and heard her mention the name of Marion Leslie. His curiosity was excited by hearing that there was a young Scottish lady in the Maison Royale, and on further inquiries he discovered that this young lady was the heiress of Inverchewan, one of the largest estates in the north of Scotland.

The idea at once suggested itself to his mind that he could not do better than marry her. His character was irretrievably lost, and his fortunes were desperate, otherwise he would never have dreamed of marriage, the very thought of which was distasteful to him. But marriage was now his only loophole of escape. If he returned to England, bankrupt in fame

and fortune, he might be dismissed from the army with disgrace; but if he returned the accepted lover of a rich heiress, or what was equivalent, till the truth was discovered, professed himself to be such, he might be allowed to remain in the army till his marriage; or, if that event never came off, he would at least gain time. Time to him was everything; the law could not reach him, and after a few months some fresh scandal might cause his own rascality to be forgotten.

Nairn, then, resolved, if possible, to make Marion Leslie his wife. It mattered little to him whether she was young or old, plain or pretty, so long as she was the heiress of a large property, on which it would be the easiest thing in the world to raise money to meet his present wants. He tried to find out what houses she frequented at St. Denis, so as to have an opportunity of meeting her, and it was only when he found that she lived in the strictest privacy in the Maison Royale that he had recourse to the original

device of enclosing a note in his handkerchief and throwing it over the garden wall. His previous experience led him to believe that a young girl, educated in France and living in solitude, would be only too glad to enter into a correspondence with a young nobleman who professed himself her admirer. In this matter his calculations were at fault; she had not forgotten the lessons of Stormy Jack's cottage, and her female delicacy was hurt by the proposal of a clandestine correspondence. It was so far, however, in Nairn's favour that she knew little of his previous character, and was thus less on her guard against his advances.

When, therefore, she met him at the procession, she was favourably impressed by his respectful manners and engaging conversation. He spoke to her of home (the "Open, sesame," to every Scottish heart in a foreign land), and of the scenes and persons familiar to her from her infancy, and those few words had done more to ripen their acquaintance than if

they had met at every party during the season and indulged in the vapid discourse which the fashionable world accepts as conversation. He was the bearer of a noble name, the descendant of an ancient race; he was connected with her native county, and knew those whom she had been taught to love; he had the distinguished air and the manners of a gentleman. Above all, he was the first who had spoken to her in the fervent language of admiration since Ninian essayed in vain to declare his passion, years before, at Loanhead. No wonder that, with all these advantages, Nairn had left a favourable impression on Marion's mind, and that she listened to him with pleasure when he spoke of their meeting again in Scotland. Was Marion, then, unfaithful to Ninian, or disposed to be so?

Think of four years of absence! Marion continued to think of Ninian as the rude, honest, open-hearted sailor boy, who had admired her when a country girl living in his father's cottage. She had heard of his successful studies with pleasure;

but, notwithstanding Alice's hints, she had failed to identify herself as the inspiring cause of that success. It had never occurred to her that Ninian's feeling toward her was more ardent or profound than that which every boy experiences when the passions begin to cause themselves to be felt; and when she found, after Nairn's departure, that his image was more frequently present to her mind than that of any other young man she had ever met, it never struck her that Ninian could have any cause of complaint against her. In truth, she never thought of Ninian at all, or dreamed that he continued to love her; amid new scenes and pursuits, his boyish love had almost faded from her mind, and when she returned she thought of him only as of one to whom her uncle's influence might be useful.

If Marion had known that Ninian's passion had grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength—that it lay at the foundation of all his aspirations after fame, and of all his efforts to toil up the steeps

of intellectual greatness—that it alone gave value to all that he had achieved, and shed its own radiant halo of hope over the future; if she had but known that it was for her sake, and in the hope of one day calling her his own, that he had striven to make himself worthy of her—that she, in a word, had been the guiding star of his existence, in whose light he had lived, and in whose track he had followed—if Marion had known all this, and meditated on it in the solitude of the Maison Royale, she might have come to love him in return; for there is something in such love as Ninian's which will touch the heart of every woman, unless it be incrusted with a covering of worldliness, which renders it impervious to all generous feelings, or occupied by some other image, which bars the door of entrance against every stranger.

Marion was unworldly and fancy-free; but Nairn had tapped at the chamber of her heart before Ninian came to tell her the simple story of his love.

How much of our suffering in this world

springs from our ignorance; if we had only known—but then we did not know—and so we must bear the consequences.

CHAPTER XI.

On the same day, at mess, Murray asked Nairn if he had heard anything lately of Miss Leslie of Inverchewan, whom he had met in France, and always spoken of in terms of admiration. Nairn replied that he had only accidentally learned that she had returned to Scotland, and that great preparations were being made to celebrate her attaining her majority. Murray, without addressing himself directly to Nairn, informed those around him that Miss Leslie was decidedly the *belle* of her native county, and that it was reported she was about to bestow her hand upon a young baronet, whose estates were situated in the same part of the country. Nairn seemed startled at first, but, recovering his presence of mind, he said that he had always entertained too high an opinion of Miss Leslie to believe

that she would bestow her hand upon such a milksop as Sir Alexander Dalgarno of that ilk. The conversation then dropped.

Nairn loved Marion as much as his cold, selfish heart could love any one. He was so much attached to himself that he had very little affection to spare for others; what little he had he gave to Marion. If she had been poor, he would have passed her by with indifference; but her charms were enhanced in his eyes by the knowledge that she was the heiress of a large property. The tender passion, however, was not much in Nairn's line: he was so worn out by a long course of dissipation, that he was already *blasé* and old while still a youth. Still he loved Marion after a careless, indolent fashion, and felt roused by the report that she was likely to become the wife of another.

At that moment, however, he felt more interest in his horse, the Flying Dutchman, than in all the women in existence, Marion included. He had laid such heavy stakes in favour of his own horse, that if Heavysides won, he was irretrievably ruined.

Heavysides was an old hand upon the turf, and had not the character of being over-merciful to those whom fortune, or his own superior skill, placed in his power. If he lost, he could not pay—if he could not pay, England could no longer be his home; he must hide his dishonour on the continent, with other refugees of the same class.

His only hope of success lay in a heavy fall of rain; but on this occasion heaven seemed to have abandoned him to his fate. Often at night he awoke, thinking that he heard the rain sweeping through the elms in the Long Walk, and beating against his casement—alas, it was only a dream. The windows of heaven were sealed. It could not be said that such a man ever really prayed, but he blasphemed the name of his Maker, and cursed his own ill-luck.

The day fixed for the match at length arrived. The race-course was as dry as the desert, and Nairn's heart failed him from the first. We need not describe the race, or the betting, or the frequenters of such a scene; abler pens than ours have rendered the reader familiar

with all the humour, the excitement, and the rascality of the English race-courses. Heavysides' horse won with ease, and Nairn's was left nowhere—a statement of the sporting penny-a-liners, which we leave metaphysicians to reconcile with the known qualities of space and matter.

As soon as the result was known, Nairn disappeared from the race-course. It was supposed, at first, that he had returned to Windsor, but he did not appear at mess. His absence excited no particular notice, and was, in fact, rather felt to be a relief, as it allowed his brother-officers to discuss the event of the day with more freedom than if he had been present.

He did not appear at breakfast next morning; but this excited no suspicion, as he was always irregular in his habits, and rarely left his quarters till noon, unless compelled by duty.

About ten o'clock, Captain Heavysides sauntered slowly into the barrack square. His reception by the officers he met was somewhat constrained and formal — all

knew his errand, and though Nairn was far from being a favourite in the regiment, the *esprit de corps* was too strong to allow them to rejoice at the defeat of their own comrade, and the success of the ponderous horseman. They were afraid, also, that Nairn would not be able to meet his engagements, and might thus bring disgrace upon the regiment to which he belonged.

Nairn's servant received orders to conduct Captain Heavysides to his master's quarters. After a few minutes he returned, and addressing a group of officers, said—

"Nairn is not in his quarters—he has not slept there. He and I have a small score to settle together, and his disappearance at this moment is rather awkward."

"I am a friend of Lord Nairn's," said Menteith, confronting him, "and I will allow no imputation to be made on his character during his absence."

"As you are a friend of Lord Nairn's, you are doubtless acquainted with his

address," said Heavysides, dryly, "and it would be satisfactory for me to know it."

"Captain Heavysides will not enjoy that satisfaction, at least so far as I am concerned; but if he wishes to extend his acquaintance with me, I may inform him that *I* do not intend to leave Windsor for some weeks to come."

Heavysides stared at him with a puzzled air; his slow intellect did not quite understand the purport of his words, and, before he had time to answer, Murray interposed.

"You must not mind what Menteith says. He is a friend of Nairn's, and irritated at his absence, of which we knew nothing till this moment. He may have gone up to town to see his banker; in that case he will return in the course of the day."

Heavysides left them, twirling his moustache, and clanking his spurs. He did not quite understand the words of that fiery Highlander, but they seemed to breathe something of defiance. At present, how-

ever, they left little impression upon his mind, which was entirely occupied with balancing the chances of recovering his money from Nairn. He had too much solidarity, mental and corporeal, to manifest strong excitement under any circumstances, so he sauntered slowly down to the station, found an up train about to start, took his place in it, and got out at Staines.

He inquired of the station-master if he knew Lord Nairn, or could inform him whether he had gone up to town after the race. The station-master was familiar with his person, and had exchanged a few words with him while waiting for the evening train. Then he had gone on to London? The station-master could not vouch for that, as there were many intermediate stations, but he had shown him into a first-class carriage, and closed the door after him—he had observed that he looked very ill.

Heavysides returned to Windsor, and wrote an account of the whole affair to a friend in London, requesting him, at the same time, to put himself in communica-

tion with the police, and to use every effort to discover where he was.

In the course of a few days he received a letter from his friend, informing him that all his inquiries about Nairn had been unsuccessful—it was certain that he had come up to London on the evening after the race, and taken a cab at the Waterloo station, but here all trace of him was lost. He had not been seen at any of his usual haunts, and it was probable that he had gone abroad.

About a week after the race, Philip Mowbray received an anonymous letter, in a female hand—the writer briefly informed him that Nairn was dangerously ill, and as he had frequently mentioned his name during his illness, she was led to believe that he must be an intimate friend. He was utterly unprovided with money to procure the attention and comforts which his state required, and though she had repeatedly written to his father, her letters had remained unanswered. She had, therefore, ventured to write to him, and hoped that he would call and see Nairn with-

out delay, at the address which she gave in London.

Philip showed the letter to Menteith who proposed that they should at once start for London. As they were uncertain how long they might require to remain in London, they informed the colonel confidentially of the object of their journey, and obtained *carte blanche* to extend their leave of absence as long as they found necessary. They promised to write from time to time, and on no account to allow Nairn to return to Windsor when he recovered.

END OF VOL. II.

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